



# THE GOOD LIFE

DATE DUE

What was the secret of Gandhiji's inexhaustible store of energy?

What sustained him through an ordeal of 21 days' fast in his 74th year?

His tremendous and unique willpower excited envy even among his bitterest enemies.

His control over all his senses was a phenomenon in the modern age.

All this may be riddle to those who are ignorant of his way of living. But being the benefactor No 1 of the world, he kept nothing hidden and not only shared his experiments with the people but implored the suffering humanity to benefit from them. On the Himalayas, pure white snow falls, the plains are covered with dust and dirt. Gandhiji's personality is as great as the Himalayas, the snow-white thoughts only enter his mind. When he put these sublime thoughts into sentences, they were like streamlets which make the Ganges. The Ganges is worshipped by millions. Gandhiji's writings have inspired the world.



Gandhi led a life of self-indulgence in the early part of his life. But suddenly the truth glimmered through the dark and chaotic surroundings of dissipation that this was but the death-dance of an ignorant and self-conceited moth. What he mistook for light was mere brightness. By leading a life of self-indulgence he was like a caterpillar taking the thread from its own mouth and

building its cocoon, ultimately to be caught in and suffocated by the same cocoon



He took a vow of *Brahmacharya*. His conception of *Brahmacharya* is not narrow, mere physical abstinence is not enough, complete control over all the senses and a mastery over the thoughts is a condition precedent for the attainment of this glorious ideal. To reach this peak of purity he had to develop an unbending will-power. And how he cultivated it forms an important part of this book. All of us know and realize the necessity and benefits of self-restraint but on the slippery desires of the flesh the spirit fails. In this book Gandhi discusses all the aspects of celibacy and shows the way to do it.



It is the duty of every parent to present this book to his growing children, to ensure their physical and moral goodness on the alluring and thorny path of life.

# THE GOOD LIFE

M. K. GANDHI

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JAG PARVESH CHANDER

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Dedicated

## TO THE YOUNG

**I**NNOCENT youth is a priceless possession not to be squandered away for the sake of a momentary excitement miscalled pleasure

*M. K. Gandhi*



# Introduction To The Third Edition

*The Good Life* is the crux and the cream of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy. Popularity earned by the first and second editions has encouraged us to reprint the book. In the Third Edition the list of contents has been abbreviated, reshaped and harmonized with Gandhiji's ideals, the bulk of quotations have been rearranged, the sub-titles have been omitted, the appendix has been incorporated into the body of the book, the entire manuscript is divided into seven parts instead of the six, each part is introduced by a middle-of-the-page caption, and there has been inserted an attractive and appropriate quotation by some personality other than Gandhiji.

Gandhiji's GOLDEN LAWS OF GOOD LIFE is an intimate study of his ideology by a galaxy of distinguished personalities.

We trust the reader will appreciate the new edition.

—PUBLISHERS



• • • • **To the Reader**

IT is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well-considered, and taken with the greatest deliberation. Both my continence and non-violence were derived from personal experience and became necessary in response to the calls of public duty. The isolated life I had to lead in South Africa whether as a householder, legal practitioner, social reformer or politician, required, for the due fulfilment of these duties, the strictest regulation of sexual life and a rigid practice of non-violence and truth in human relations, whether with my own countrymen or with the Europeans. I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability. Nor can I claim any special merit for such non-violence or continence as I have been able to reach with laborious research. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make

the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith. Work without faith is like an attempt to reach the bottom of a bottomless pit.\*



WHY argue that because a man like me could not escape unclean thoughts, there is no hope for the rest ? Why not rather argue that if a Gandhi, who was once given to lust, can to-day live as friend and brother to his wife and can look upon the fairest damsel as his sister or daughter, there is hope for the lowliest and the lost ? If God was merciful to one who was so full of lust, certainly all the rest would have His mercy too.†

**M. K. GANDHI**

\**Harijan* : Oct. 30, 1936

†*Young India* : June 26, 1927.

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PART FIRST

**The Voice of Silence**



*There is but one road to the Path ; at its very end alone the “Voice of Silence” can be heard The ladder by which the candidate ascends is formed of the rungs of suffering and pain, these can be silenced only by the voice of virtue*

—H.P. BLAVATSKY



## PART FIRST

# The Voice of Silence

When Shri Sarat Chandra Bose was here the other day, I asked him if he had been to Segaoon. He said he had been and had a long talk with Gandhiji, but all that Gandhiji had said to him was contained on a slip of the newspaper :

“Give my love to all the members of the family.”

Then he proceeded to the East. I asked Mahatmaji if he was going to continue his silence in Delhi. The reply was a nod of assent. I then asked him if he would continue it in the Frontier Province also. Again he nodded assent. Amazing, is it not.

I do not know how all this is going to be, but I am sure his keenest desire is to continue the silence indefinitely. Several times during this period of silence he has written “What a mercy I am silent !” There is no doubt it has given him immeasurable joy and freedom from what may have been many an unhappy moment of angry outbursts.

When one comes to think of it, one cannot help feeling that nearly half of the misery of the world would disappear if we fretting mortals knew the virtue of silence. Before modern civilisation came upon us, at least six to eight hours of silence out of twenty-four were vouchsafed to us. Modern civilisation has taught us to convert night into day and golden silence into brazen din and noise. What a great thing it would be if we in our busy lives could retire into ourselves each day for at least a couple of hours and prepare our minds to listen to the Voice of the Great Silence. The Divine Radio is always singing if we could only make ourselves ready to listen to it, but it is impossible to listen it without silence. St Teresa has used a charming image to sum up the sweet result of silence :

“You will at once feel your senses gather themselves together, they seem like bees which return to the hive and there shut themselves up to work at the making of honey. and this will take place without

effort or care on your part God thus rewards the violence which your soul has been doing to itself ; and gives to it such a domination over the senses that a sign is enough when it desires to recollect itself for them to obey and so gather themselves together At the first call of the will, they come back more and more quickly At last after many and many exercises of this kind, God disposes them to a state of absolute repose and of perfect contemplation ”



MODERN scientists recognize the potency of thought and that is why it is said that as a man thinks so does he become One who always think, of murder will turn a murderer, and one who thinks of incest will be incestuous On the contrary he who always thinks of truth and non-violence will be truthful and non-violent, and he whose thoughts are fixed on God will be godly

*Harijan* . Jan. 11, 1936



ALWAYS aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed Always aim at purifying your thoughts and everything will be well There is nothing more potent than thought Deed follows word and word follows thought. The word is the result of a mighty thought, and where the thought is mighty and pure, the result is always mighty and pure.

*Harijan* : April 24, 1937.



TRUTH has been the very foundation of my life. *Brahmcharya* and *ahimsa* where born later out of truth. Whatever, therefore, you do, be true to yourselves and to the world Hide not your thoughts If it is shameful to reveal them, it is more shameful to think them.

*Harijan* : April 24, 1937.



I FEEL thankful to God that for years past I have come to regard secrecy as a sin, more especially in politics. If we realised the presence of God as witness to all we say and do, we would not have anything to conceal from anybody on earth. For, we would not think unclean thoughts before our Maker,

much less speak them. It is uncleanness that seeks secrecy and darkness. The tendency of human nature is to hide dirt, we do not want to see or touch dirty things : we want to put them out-of sight. And so must it be with our speech. I would suggest that we should avoid even thinking thoughts we would hide from the world

—*Young India* : Dec 12, 1922.



IT has often occurred to me that a seeker after truth has to be silent. I know the wonderful efficacy of silence. I visited a monastery, Trappist, in South Africa. A beautiful place it was. Most of the inmates of that place were under a vow of silence. I enquired of the Father the motive of it and he said that "the motive is apparent. We are frail human beings. We do not know very often what we say. If we want to listen to the still small voice that is always speaking within us, it will not be heard if we continually speak." I understood that precious lesson. I know the secret of silence.

—*Young India* : August 6, 1925.



THERE are occasions when silence is wisdom

—*Young India* : Oct. 17, 1929.



I BELIEVE that it often becomes the duty of every public man to be silent even at the risk of incurring unpopularity and even a much worse penalty, as it undoubtedly becomes his duty to speak out his mind when the occasion requires it, though it may be at the cost of his life.

—*Young India* : Oct. 17, 1929.



AS I do nothing except with an ultimate spiritual end in view, this silence obviously carried with its spiritual advantage. Silence is essential for one whose life is in an incessant search for truth. But such silence is a much more serious affair than this. Even writing as a means of communication must stop. Truth would speak, if it must, in every act and not through the written word.

—*Harijan* : April 27, 1935



THERE is another merit in silence which these four weeks

## THE GOOD LIFE

demonstrated to me unmistakably. I am prone to anger like anyone else, but I can successfully suppress one's anger as perhaps out that silence helps one to suppress one's wrath if nothing else does. How is one to give vent to one's wrath if one is silent? Not by eyes. Surely not by physical violence, when one is pledged to non-violence. Not by writing, for the wrath would disappear in the very process of writing.

There are number of other uses of silence that I could mention, but these should suffice. Let me tell you that I was not looking forward to the termination of this silence. I was dreading it, and I should often like to go into silence, if not quite for a month or months, at least for brief periods.

No wonder Carlyle wrote *Speech is slavery, but silence is golden*

—Harijan · April 17, 1935.

❖ ❖ ❖

WELL, I should like to leave you a message of silence. Speech without the bricking of experience based on action will lack chastity and refinement. I would ask you to curb your tongues and make use of your hands and feet for the service of the community. After you have done so for a few years, you will speak the speech that counts and never fails

—Harijan : May 4, 1935

❖ ❖ ❖

Q. THE greatest thing you have ever done is the observance of your Monday silence. You illustrate thereby the storing up and releasing of power when needed. What place has it continued to have in the preparation of your spiritual tasks?

A. "It is not the greatest thing I have done, but it certainly means a great thing to me," said Gandhiji. I am now taking silence almost every day. If I could impose on myself silence for more days in the week than one I should love it. In Yervada Jail I once observed 15 day's silence. I was in the seventh heaven during that period. But this silence is now being utilized to get through arrears of work. It is a superficial advantage after all. The real silence should not be interrupted even by writing notes to others and carrying on conversation through them. The notes interrupt the sacredness of the silence.

when you should listen to the music of the spheres That is why I often say that my silence is a fraud"

—*Harijan* : Dec. 29, 1936.



IT has now become both a physical and spiritual necessity for me. Originally it was taken to relieve the sense of pressure. Then I wanted time for writing. After, however, I had practised it for some time I saw the spiritual value of it. It suddenly flashed across my mind that that was the time when I could best hold communion with God. And now I feel as though I was naturally built for silence. Of course I may tell you that from my childhood I have been noted for my silence. I was silent at school, and in my London days I was taken for a silent drone by friends.

—*Harijan* : Dec, 10, 1938.



1 THERE is a perceptible drop in blood pressure when I observe silence. Medical friends have therefore advised me to take as much silence as I can.

2. There is no doubt whatsoever that after every silence I feel recuperated and have greater energy for work. The output of work during silence is much greater than when I am not silent.

3 The mind enjoys a peace during silence which it does not without it. That is to say, the decision to be silent itself produces a soothing effect on me. It lifts a burden off my mind. My experience tells me that silence soothes the nerves in a manner no drugs can. With me it also induces sleep.

*Causion* : I have noticed in the jails that prisoners get moody when, deprived of company, they have to observe enforced silence. To produce the effect I have described, silence has to be liked. No one, therefore, need be silent out of love of imitation or merely for the knowledge that it produces on me the effect described by me. The best thing would be to take silence on medical advice. Needless to say that here I do not refer to the spiritual need and effects of silence.

—*Harijan* : Oct. 28, 1939.





PART SECOND

**From Silence to Virtue**



*The senses and organs are esteemed great, but the thinking self is greater than they The discriminating principle is greater than the thinking self, and that which is greater than the discriminating principle is he Thus knowing what is greater than the discriminating principle and strengthening the lower by the Higher Self, do those of mighty arms lay this foe which is formed from desire and is difficult to seize.*

—*BHAGAVAD GITA*  
( *Chapter III* )



## PART SECOND

# From Silence to Virtue

OF all the animal creations of God, man is the only animal who has been created in order that he may know his Maker. Man's aim in life is not therefore to add from day to day to his material prospects and to his material possessions but his predominant calling is from day to day to come nearer his own Maker.

—*Young India* : Oct. 20, 1927.



A MAN of character will make himself worthy of any position he is given.

—*Young India* : June 9, 1920



There are no two opinions about the fact that intellect rather than riches will lead. It might equally be admitted by the correspondent that the heart rather than the intellect will eventually lead. Character, not brains, will count at the crucial moment.

—*Young India* : Sep. 19, 1921.



PURITY of character and salvation depend on purity of heart.



CHARACTER is any day more eloquent than speech.



PUT all your knowledge, learning and scholarship in one scale and truth and purity in the other and the latter will by far outweigh the other. The *miasma* of moral impurity has to-day spread among our schoolgoing children and like a hidden epidemic is working havoc among them. I therefore appeal to you, boys and girls, to keep your minds and bodies pure. All your scholarship, all your study of the scriptures will be in vain if you fail to translate their teachings into your daily life. I know that some of the teachers too do not lead pure

and clean lives. To them I say that even if they impart all the knowledge in the world to their students but inculcate not truth and purity among them, they will have betrayed them and instead of raising them, set them on the downward road to perdition. Knowledge without character is a power for evil only, as seen in the instances of so many 'talented thieves' and 'gentlemen rascals' in the world — *Young India* · Feb 21, 1929.



*'TAKE care of your pence and the pounds will take care of themselves'* is not only a maxim of economic thrift, it is a moral maxim as well. No matter how insignificant the thing you have to do, do it as well as you can, give it as much of your care and attention as you would give to the thing you regard as most important. For it will be by those small things that you shall be judged — *Harijan* : July 7, 1935.



MORALITY which depends upon the helplessness of a man or woman has not much to recommend it. Morality is rooted in the purity of hearts — *Harijan* : June 8, 1940.



DISCIPLINE knows no rank. A king who knows its value submits to his page in matters where he appoints him as the sole judge — *Young India* : Dec. 4, 1925.



THERE is no deliverance and no hope without sacrifice, discipline and self-control. Mere sacrifice without discipline will be unavailing. — *Young India* · Jan 9, 1926



A TRUE soldier does not argue, as he marches, how success is going to be ultimately achieved. But he is confident that if he only plays his humble part well, somehow or other the battle will be won. It is in that spirit that every one of us should act. It is not given to us to know the future. But it is given to every one of us to know how to do our own part well. Let us then do that which we know is possible for us if we only will.



THERE will have to be rigid and iron discipline before we achieve anything great and enduring, and that discipline will not come by mere academic argument and appeal to reason and logic Discipline is learnt in the school of adversity



WE cannot learn discipline by compulsion.



LET it not be said that we are a people incapable of maintaining discipline Indiscipline will mean disaster, many a one like me who is pining to see *Swaraj* in his life-time perish in sorrow and grief — *Young India* Mar 12, 1931



DISCIPLINE is to disorder what bulwarks and embankments are to storms and floods — *Young India* May 14, 1931



NO reliance can be placed upon an organization which is not able to exercise effective control over its members Imagine an army whose soldiers, under the false belief that they are advancing the common cause, adopt measures in defiance of those taken by the headquarters Such action may well spell defeat

*Harijan* · Oct 21, 1939



IN the coming struggle, if it must come, no half-hearted loyalty will answer the purpose Imagine a general marching to battle with doubting, ill-prepared soldiers He will surely march to defeat I will not consciously make any such fatal experiment This is not meant to frighten Congressmen If they have the will, they will not find my instructions difficult to follow Correspondents tell me that, though they have no faith in me or the *charkha*, they ply the latter for the sake of discipline I do not understand this language Can a general fight on the strength of soldiers who, he knows, have no faith in him? The plain meaning of this language is that the correspondents believe in mass action but do not believe in the connection I see between it and the *charkha* etc if the action is to be non-violent. They believe in my hold on the masses, but they do not believe in the things which I believe have given me that

hold. They merely want to exploit me and will grudgingly pay the price which my ignorance or obstinacy (according to them) demands I do not call this discipline. True discipline gives enthusiastic obedience to instructions even though they do not satisfy reason A volunteer exercises his reason when he chooses his general, but after having made the choice, he does not waste his time and energy in scanning every instruction and testing it on the anvil of his reason before following it He is 'not to reason why'" *Harijan* Mar. 3, 1910



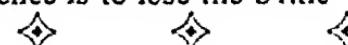
LET no one charge me with ever having advised or encouraged weakness or surrender on matters of principle But I have said, as I say again, that every trifle must not be dignified into a principle — *Young India* : Oct 22, 1925.



ILL-DIGESTED principles are, if anything, worse than ill-digested food, for the latter harms the body and there is a cure for it, whereas the former ruins the soul and there is no cure for it. — *Young India* . May 1, 1937.



TO lose patience is to lose the battle



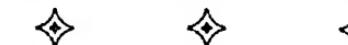
IF patience is worth anything, it must endure to the end of time. And a living faith will last in the midst of the blackest storm. — *Young India* : Dec. 14, 1927.



THE greater our patience—another word for suffering—the greater will be our strength — *Young India* . July 19, 1931.



IF we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they will escape us like a will-o'-the-wisp. The more we pursue them the farther will they fly The same teaching has been embodied by Krishna in the immortal words *Action alone is thine. Leave thou the fruit severely alone. Action is duty, fruit is the right.*



EVERY duty performed confers upon one certain rights, whilst the exercise of every right carries with it certain corresponding obligations. And so the never-ending cycle of duty and right goes ceaselessly on. — *Young India* : Aug 22, 1929



RIGHTS accrue automatically to him who duly performs his duties. In fact the right to perform one's duties is the only right that is worth living for and dying for. It covers all legitimate rights. All the rest is grab under one guise or another and contains in it seeds of *himsa*. — *Young India* 27, 1930



THEY say 'means are after all means' I would say 'means are after all everything'. As the means, so the end. Violent means will give violent *Swaraj*. That would be a menace to the world and to India herself. There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed the Creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end. Realisation of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception. — *Harijan*. Feb 28, 1937



FOR me it is enough to know the means. Means and end are convertible terms in my philosophy of life.

— *Young India* · Dec 26, 1924



INDEED one's faith in one's plans and methods is truly tested when the horizon before one is the blackest.

— *Young India* April 3, 1924



THERE is no cause for despondency for a man who has faith and resolution.

— *Young India* Aug 14, 1924



IT is a poor faith that needs fair weather for standing firm. That alone is true faith that stands the foulest weather.

— *Young India* Nov 20, 1924



BLIND enthusiasm and blind faith can lead to no lasting good. — *Young India* Oct. 22, 1925.



IT is faith that steers us through stormy seas, faith that moves mountains and faith that jumps across the ocean. That faith is nothing but a living, wide-awake consciousness of God within. He who has achieved that faith wants nothing.

— *Young India* Sept 24, 1925.



ONE'S faith has got to be bright and intelligent before it can enkindle faith in others. — *Young India* Oct 22, 1925.



THAT faith is of little value which can flourish only in fair weather. Faith in order to be of any value has to survive the severest trials. Your faith is a whitened sepulchre if it cannot stand against the calumny of the whole world.

— *Young India* April 25 1929.



FAITH cannot be given by anybody. It has to come from within. — *Young India* April 17, 1930.



DR MOTT What affords you the greatest hope and satisfaction?



Gandhiji Faith in myself is born of Faith in God



Dr. Mott : In moments when your heart may sink within you, you hark back to this faith in God?



Gandhiji : Yes. That is why I have always described myself as an irrepressible optimist. — *Harijan* Dec 26, 1936.



SMOKING is in a way a greater curse than drink, in as much as the victim does not realise its evil in time. It is not regarded as a sign of barbarism, it is even acclaimed by civilised

people. I can only say, let those who can, give it up and set the example.

—*Young India*. Feb. 4, 1926.



I SHALL now proceed to say something about cigarette-smoking and coffee and tea-drinking. They are not necessities of life. There are some who manage to take ten cups of coffee a day. Is it necessary for their healthy development and for keeping them awake for the performance of their duties? If it is necessary to take coffee or tea to keep them awake, let them not drink coffee or tea but go to sleep. We must not become slaves to these things. But the majority of the people who drink coffee or tea are slaves to them. Cigars and cigarettes, whether foreign or indigenous, must be avoided. Cigarette-smoking is like an opiate and the cigars that you smoke have a touch of opium about them. They get to your nerves and you cannot leave them afterwards. How can you foul your mouth by converting it into a chimney? If you give up these habits of smoking cigars and cigarettes and drinking coffee and tea, you will find out for yourselves how much you are able to save. A drunkard in Tolstoy's story is hesitating to execute his design of murder so long as he has not smoked his cigar. But he puffs it, and then gets up smiling and saying, "What a coward am I," takes the dagger and does the deed. Tolstoy spoke from experience. He has written nothing without having had personal experience of it. And he is much more against cigars and cigarettes than against drink. But do not make the mistake that between drink and tobacco, drink is a lesser evil. No. If cigarette is Beelzebub then drink is Satan.

—*Young India* · Sept 15, 1927



IF every smoker stopped the dirty habit, refused to make of his mouth a chimney, to foul his breath, damage his teeth and dull his sense of delicate discrimination and make a present of his savings to some national cause, he would benefit both himself and the nation.

—*Young India* · July 5, 1928



YOU will not be deceived by the specious argument that India must not be made sober by compulsion, and that those who wish to drink must have facilities provided for them.

The State does not care for the vice of its people. We do not regulate an illegal vice of all sorts. We do not provide facilities for the vice to enable their progress. I do not think to be more desirable than that and perhaps even prudential. But in sober, the power of habit.

—Young India, Feb 21, 1922

♦ ♦ ♦

DRUGS and drink are the two arms of the devil with which he strikes his helpless. — Young India, April 12, 1921

— Young India, April 12, 1921

♦ ♦ ♦

WHAT about the education of the children? may be the question will. I venture to say "to say" that it is a matter of deep love that is for the country to try to keep children educated from the drink revenue. We shall deserve the curse of poverty, if we do not, children to stop the dark evil, even though we may have to sacrifice the education of our children. But we need not. The more you have learned of the idea of nature, education, self-respecting, by intellect, spirit, in our schools and colleges. I am very sorry that it solves the problem of education as a whip can. The country cannot bear such taxation. Even the existing taxation is unbearable. Not only must we do away with the opium and the drink revenue, but the other revenue has also to be very considerably reduced, if the education of poverty of the masses is to be combated in the near future. — Young India, Jan 12, 1925

♦ ♦ ♦

IN India there can be no reason for any referendum because drink and drug habit are universally recognised as a vice. Drink is not a fashion in India as it is in the West. To talk therefore of a referendum in India is to trifle with the problem.

— Young India, April 22, 1923

♦ ♦ ♦

I HAVE not hesitated to give my opinion, that it was a wicked thing for the Imperial Government to have transferred thus the most immoral source of revenue to the provinces and to have thus made this tainted revenue the one source for defrauding the cost of the education of Indian youth.

— Young India, Sept 8, 1927

THERE is as much flaw in the argument that it is an interference with the right of the people as there would be in the argument that the laws prohibiting theft interfere with the right of thieving. A thief steals all earthly possessions, a drunkard steals his own and his neighbours' honour.

— *Young India* : Jan. 6, 1927



INDIA is the most promising country in the world for carrying out total prohibition for the simple reason that addiction to drink is not considered respectable or fashionable and is confined only to a certain class of people

— *Young India* : June 23, 1927



I VENTURE to submit that prosecutions are the smallest and the destructive part of prohibition. I suggest that there is a larger and constructive side to prohibition. People drink because of the conditions to which they are reduced. It is the factory labourers and others that drink. They are forlorn, uncared-for, and they take to drink. They are no more vicious by nature than teetotallers are saints by nature. The majority of people are controlled by their environment

— *Young India* Sept. 8, 1927



I HOLD drinking spirituous liquors in India to be more criminal than the petty thefts which I see starving men and women committing and for which they are prosecuted and punished. I do tolerate, very unwillingly it is true and helplessly because of want of full realisation of the law of love, a moderate system of penal code. And so long as I do, I must advocate the summary punishment of those who manufacture the fiery liquid and those even who will persist in drinking it notwithstanding repeated warnings. I do not hesitate forcibly to prevent my children from rushing into fire or deep waters. Rushing to red water is far more dangerous than rushing to raging furnace or flooded stream. The latter destroys only the body, the former destroys both body and soul.

— *Young India* : Aug. 8, 1929



WHATEVER may be true of countries with cold climates I am sure that in a climate like ours there is no need for drink whatsoever. Nothing but ruin - trees a nation in the face that is a prey to the drink habit. History records that empires have been destroyed through that cause. We have it in India that the great community to which Sati Karthikeyan belonged was ruined by that habit. The iron iron evil was undoubtedly one of the contributory factors in the fall of Rome. If therefore you will live decently you will slay that evil which there is yet time.

— *Young India* . April 11, 1922



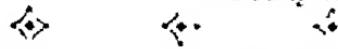
DRINK and drugs are the mortal well-doers of those who are given to this habit. For each cloth undermines the economic foundations of the nation and throws millions out of employment. The distress in each case is felt in the home and therefore by the woman. Only those women who have drunkards as their husbands know what havoc the drink devil works in homes that once were orderly and peace ruling. Millions of women in our hamlets know what unemployment means.

— *Young India* . April 10, 1930



ANGER is short of madness and the noblest causes have been damaged by advocates affected with temporary lunacy.

— *Young India* . Sep 27, 1919.



‘CONQUER anger,’ says Lord Buddha, by *non anger*’ But what is that ‘non-anger’? It is a positive quality, and means the supreme virtue of charity or love. You must be roused of this supreme virtue which must express itself in your going to the angry man, ascertaining from him the cause of his anger, making amends if you have given any cause for offence and then bringing home to him the error of his way and convincing him that it is wrong to be provoked. This consciousness of the quality of the soul, and deliberate exercise of it elevate not only the man but the surrounding atmosphere. Of course only he who has that love will exercise it. This love can certainly be cultivated by incessant striving.

— *Young India* . June 12, 1928

I DO sometimes become extremely angry with myself but I also pray to be delivered from that devil and God has given me power to suppress my anger.—*Young India* : Nov 12, 1931.



Q *You have the reputation of never being angry Is that true ?*

A. It is not that I do not get angry I do not give vent to anger I cultivate the quality of patience as angerlessness, and generally speaking succeed But I only control my anger when it comes How I find it possible to control it would be a useless question, for it is a habit that everyone must cultivate and must succeed in forming by constant practice.

—*Harijan* May 1, 1935.



IT is dinned into one's ears that gratification of the sex urge is a solemn obligation like the obligation of discharging debts lawfully incurred, and, that not to do so would involve the penalty of intellectual decay This sex urge has been isolated from the desire for progeny, and it is said by the protagonists of the use of contraceptives that conception is an accident to be prevented except when the parties desire to have children. I venture to suggest that this is a most dangerous doctrine to preach anywhere, much more so in a country like India where the middle class male population has become imbecile through abuse of the creative function

—*Harijan* March 28, 1936.



MAY those who have not made self-indulgence a religion, but who are struggling to regain lost self-control which should under normal conditions be our natural state, find some help from a perusal of these pages. For their guidance the following instructions may prove needful.

1. Remember if you are married that your wife is your friend, companion and co-worker, not an instrument of sexual enjoyment.

2. Self-control is the law of your being. Therefore the sexual act can be performed only when both desire it, and

that too subject to rules which in their lucidity both may have agreed upon.

3. If you are unmarried you owe it to youself, to society and to your future partner to keep yourself pure. If you cultivate this sense of loyalty, you will find it as an infallible protection against all temptation

4. Think always of that Unseen Power which though we may never see we all feel within us as watching and noting every impure thought, and you will find that Power ever helping you.

5. Laws governing a life of self-restraint must be necessarily different from a life of self-indulgence. Therefore you will regulate your society, your reading, your haunts of recreation and your food.

You will seek the society of the good and the pure.

You will resolutely refrain from reading passion-breeding novels and magazines and read the works that sustain humanity. You will make one book your constant companion for reference and guidance.

You will avoid theatres and cinemas. Recreation is where you may not dissipate yourself but recreate yourself. You will therefore attend *Bhajan Mandalis* where the word and the tune uplift the soul

You will eat not to satisfy your palate but your hunger. A self-indulgent man lives to eat ; a self-restrained man eats to live. Therefore you will abstain from all irritating condiments, alcohol which excites the nerves, and narcotics which deaden the sense of right and wrong. You will regulate the quantity and time of your meals

6 When your passions threaten to get the better of you, go down on your knees and cry out to God for help. *Rama-nama* is my infallible help. As extraneous aid take a hip bath, i. e., sit in a tub full of cold water with your legs out of it, and you will find your passions have immediately cooled. Sit in it for a few minutes unless you are weak and there is danger of a chill

7. Take brisk walking exercise in the open air early in the morning and at night before going to bed

8 'Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise,' is a sound proverb, 9 o'clock to bed and 4 o'clock to rise is a good rule Go to bed on an empty stomach. Therefore your last meal must not be after 6 p.m.

9 Remember that man is a representative of God to serve all that lives and thus to express God's dignity and love. Let service be your sole joy, and you will need no other enjoyment in life.



IF the mind hankered after satisfaction of the flesh and the body resisted, there must be tremendous waste of vital energy leaving the body thoroughly exhausted

—Harijan April 10, 1937.



SELF-RESTRAINT never accrues to the faint-hearted. It is the beautiful fruit of watchfulness and ceaseless effort in the form of prayer and fasting. The prayer is not vain repetition nor fasting mere starvation of the body. Prayer has to come from the heart which knows God by faith, and fasting is abstinence from evil or injurious thought, activity or food. Starvation of the body when the mind thinks of multiplicity of dishes is worse than useless.

—Harijan . April 10, 1937.



SEXUAL intercourse for the purpose of carnal satisfaction is reversion to animality, and it should therefore be man's endeavour to rise above it. But failure to do so as between husband and wife cannot be regarded as a sin or a matter of obloquy. Millions in this world eat for the satisfaction of their palate, similarly millions of the husbands and wives indulge in the sex art for their carnal satisfaction and will continue to do so and also pay the inexorable penalty in the shape of numberless ills with which nature visits all violations of its order. The ideal of absolute *Brahmacharya* or married *Brahmacharya* is for those who aspire to a spiritual or higher life, it is the *sine qua non* of such life —Harijan . June 5, 1937.

THE morals, ethics and religion, are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass' good only for making a noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, *ahimsa* and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practised is referable to and derived from these three fundamental virtues. Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.

Without continence a man or woman is undone. To have no control over the senses is like sailing in a rudderless ship bound to break to pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock. Hence my constant insistence on continence. My correspondent is right in saying in effect that the coming in of contraceptives has changed the ideas about sexual relations. If mutual consent makes a sexual act moral whether within marriage or without, and by parity of reasoning even between members of the same sex, the whole basis, of sexual morality is gone and nothing but 'misery and defeat' awaits the youth of the country. Many young men and women are to be found in India who would be glad to be free from the craving for mutual intercourse in whose grip they find themselves. This craving is stronger than the strongest intoxicant which has ever enslaved men. It is futile to hope that the use of contraceptives will be restricted to the mere regulation of progeny. There is hope for a decent life only so long as the sexual act is definitely related to the conception of precious life. This rules out of court perverted sexuality and to a lesser degree promiscuity. Divorce of the sexual act from its natural consequence must lead to hideous promiscuity and condonation, if not endorsement of unnatural vice. —*Harijan* Oct. 3, 1936



HE whose thoughts do not wander and think evil, whose sleep knows no dreams and who can be wide awake even whilst asleep, is truly healthy. He does not need to take quinine. His incorruptible blood will have the inherent virtue of resisting all infection. It is for such a perfectly healthy state of body, mind and spirit that I am striving. This knows no defeat or failure.

MY Mahatmaship is worthless. It is due to my outward activities, due to my politics which is the least part of me and is therefore evanescent. What is of abiding worth is my insistence on truth, non-violence and Brahmacharya which is the real part of me. That permanent part of me, however small, is not to be despised. It is my all I prize even the failures and disillusionments which are but steps towards success

I AM myself eager to know why a thing which is claimed to be scientific and beneficial and which has many distinguished supporters repels me notwithstanding my effort to see the bright side of it.

Thus it is not proved to my satisfaction that sexual union in marriage is in itself good and beneficial to the unionists. To the contrary effect I can bear ample testimony from my own experience and that of many friends. I am not aware of any of us having derived any benefit, mental, spiritual or physical. Momentary excitement and satisfaction there certainly was. But it was invariably followed by exhaustion. And the desire for union returned immediately the effect of exhaustion had worn out. Although I have always been a conscientious worker, I can clearly recall the fact that this indulgence interfered with my work. It was the consciousness of this limitation that put me on the track of self-restraint, and I have no manner of doubt that the self-restraint is responsible for the comparative freedom from illnesses that I have enjoyed for long periods and for my output of energy and work both physical and mental which eye-witnesses have described as phenomenal.

Man is undoubtedly an artist and creator. Undoubtedly he must have beauty and therefore colour. His artistic and creative nature at its best taught him to see art in self-restraint and ugliness in uncreative union. His instinct for the artistic taught him to discriminate and to know that any conglomeration of colours was no mark of beauty, nor every sense enjoyment good in itself. His eye for art taught man to seek enjoyment in usefulness. Thus he learnt at an early stage of evolution that he was to eat not for its own sake as some of us still do, but that he should eat to enable him to live. At a later stage he learnt further that there was neither beauty nor joy in

living for its own sake, but that he must live to serve his fellow-creatures and through them his Maker. Similarly, when he pondered over the phenomenon of the pleasurableness of sexual union, he discovered that, like every other organ of sense, this one of generation had its use and abuse. And he saw that its true function, its right use, was to restrict it to generation. Any other use he saw was ugly, and he saw further that it was fraught with very serious consequences as well to the individual as to the race. It is hardly necessary for me to prolong the argument.

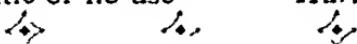
The correspondent says well that man makes art out of his necessities. Necessity is not only the mother of invention, it is the mother also of art. We should, therefore, beware of that art which has necessity as its basis. —*Harijan* April 4, 1936



ITS root meaning may be given thus that conduct which puts one in touch with God.

The conduct consists in the fullest control over all the senses. This is the true and relevant meaning of the word.

Popularly it has come to mean mere physical control over the organ of generation. This narrow meaning has debased *Brahmacharya*, and made its practice all but impossible. Control over the organ of generation is impossible without proper control over all the senses. They are all interdependent. Mind on the lower plane is included in the senses. Without control over the mind mere physical control, even if it can be attained for a time, is of little or no use. —*Harijan* June 13, 1936



SELF-INDULGENCE obviously can never be an ideal. There can be no limit to the practice of an ideal. But unlimited self-indulgence, as everybody would admit, can only result in certain destruction of the individual or the race concerned. Hence self-control alone can be our ideal, and it has been so regarded from the earliest times. Therefore we have to explore the means of its attainment not to circumvent it.

—*Harijan* . March 20, 1937



THE excessive anxiety for the chastity of young girls betrays an unhealthy mind. —*Young India* Aug 19, 1923

PART III

**From Virtue to Strength**



*'Tis virtuous to have a giant's strength,  
But tyrannous to use it like a giant.'*

—SHAKESPEARE



## PART III From Virtue to Strength

IT is not easy to write on this subject. But my own experience being fairly extensive I am always desirous of placing some of its results before the reader. Some letters which I have received have reinforced this desire

A correspondent asks :

'What is Brahmacharya ? Is it possible to observe it in its perfection ? If yes, have you attained that state ?

*Brahmacharya* properly and fully understood means search after *Brahma*. As *Brahma* is present in every one of us, we must seek for it within with the help of meditation and consequent realisation. Realisation is impossible without complete control of all the senses. Therefore *Brahmacharya* signifies control of all the senses at all times and at all places in thought, word and deed

Perfect *Brahmacharis*, men or women, are perfectly sinless. They are therefore near to God. They are like God

I have no doubt that such perfect observance of *Brahmacharya* is possible. I regret to say that I have not attained such perfection, although my effort in that direction is ceaseless and I have not given up hope of attaining it in this very life

I am on my guard when awake. I have acquired control over the body. I am also fairly restrained in speech. But as regards thoughts there still remains much for me to do. When I wish to concentrate my thoughts upon a particular subject, I am disturbed by other thoughts too and thus there is a conflict between them. Yet during waking hours I am able to prevent their collision. I may be said to have reached a state where I am free from unclean thoughts. But I cannot exercise an equal control over my thoughts in sleep. In sleep all manner of thoughts enter my mind, and I also dream unexpected

dreams Sometimes there arises a craving for pleasures previously enjoyed. When these cravings are impure, there are bad dreams This condition implies sinful life

My thoughts of sin are scotched but not killed If I had acquired perfect mastery over my thoughts, I should not have suffered from pleurisy, dysentery and appendicitis as I have during the last ten years I believe that when the soul is sinless, the body which she inhabits is healthy too That is to say, as the soul progresses towards freedom from sin, the body also tends to become immune from disease But a healthy body in this case does not mean a strong body A powerful soul lives only in a weak body As the soul advances in strength the body languishes A perfectly earthly body might yet be quite emaciated A strong body is often diseased Even if there be no disease, such a body catches infection soon, while a perfectly healthy body enjoys complete immunity from it Pure blood has the power of expelling all obnoxious germs

This wonderful state is indeed difficult to reach Or else I should have reached it already, for I am confident that I have not been indifferent in adopting every single measure conducting to that end There is no external thing which can keep me from my goal, but it is not given us easily to wipe out the impressions left by past actions I am not at all despondent in spite of this delay, for I can conceive the state of perfect freedom from sin, I can even catch a faint glimpse of it And the progress I have made gives ground for hope, not for despair Even if I die without realising my aspiration I shall not believe that I am defeated For I believe in a future life as strongly as I do in the present And so I know that the least possible effort is not wasted

I have entered into these autobiographical details in order that my correspondents and others in a like condition might feel encouraged and cultivate self confidence Atma is the same in every one of us All souls possess equal potentialities; only some have developed their powers while others have them in a dormant condition These latter too will have a like experience if only they try

Thus far I have dealt with *Brahmacharya* in its wider significance *Brahmacharya* in the popular or current acceptance

of the term means control of animal passion in thought, word and deed. This meaning is also correct as the control of passion has been held to be very difficult. The same stress has not been laid upon the control of the palate, and hence the control of passion has grown more difficult and almost impossible. Medical men believe that passion is stronger in a body worn out by disease, and therefore *Brahmacharya* appears hard to our enervated people.

I have spoken above of a weak but healthy body. Let no one therefore run away with the idea that we should neglect physical culture. I have expounded the highest form of *Brahmacharya* in my broken language which may perhaps be misunderstood. One who wishes to attain perfect control of all the senses must be prepared in the end to welcome weakness of body. All desire for bodily strength vanishes when there is no longer any attachment for the body.

But the body of a *Brahmachari* who has conquered animal passion must be very strong and full of lustre. Even this restricted *Brahmacharya* is a wonderful thing. One who is free from carnal thoughts even in his dreams is worthy of the world's adoration. It is clear that control of the other senses is an easy thing for him.

Another friend writes :

"My condition is pitiable. The same vicious thought disturbs me day and night, in the office, on the road, when I am reading or working or even praying. How am I to control my thoughts? How can I look upon womankind as upon my own mother? How can nothing but the purest affection emanate from the eyes? How can I eradicate wicked thoughts? I have your article on *Brahmacharya* before me, but it seems I cannot profit by it at all."

This is indeed heart-rending. Many of us are in a like predicament. But so long as the mind is up against wicked thoughts, there is no reason to get disheartened. The eyes should be closed and the ears stopped with cotton if they are sinning. It is a good practice to walk with the eyes cast downwards so that there is no occasion for them to wander in

other directions. One should flee from the place where unclean talk is going on or where unclean music is being sung.

Control should be acquired over the organ of taste. My experience is that one who has not mastered taste, cannot control animal passion either. It is no easy task to conquer the palate. But conquest of passion is bound up with the conquest of the palate. One of the means of controlling taste is to give up spices and condiments altogether or as far as possible. Another and a more effective means is always to cultivate a feeling that we eat just in order to sustain the body and never for taste. We take in air not for taste but for life. Just as we take water to quench our thirst, in the same way should we take food only to satisfy hunger. Unfortunately parents make us contract a contrary habit from the very childhood. They corrupt us by giving us all manner of delicacies not for our sustenance but out of mistaken affection. We have got to fight against this unfavourable home atmosphere.

But our most powerful ally in conquering animal passion is *Ramanama* or some similar *mantra*. The *Dwadasha* *mantra* will also serve the same purpose. One may repeat any *mantra* one pleases. I have suggested *Ramanama* as I have been familiar with it since childhood and as it is my constant support in my struggles. One must be completely absorbed in whatever *mantra* one selects. One should not mind if other thoughts disturb one during the *japa*. I am confident that one who still goes on with the *japa* in faith will conquer in the end. The *mantra* becomes one's staff of life and carries one through every ordeal. One should not seek worldly profit from such sacred *mantras*. The characteristic power of these *mantras* lies in their standing guard over personal purity, and every diligent seeker will realise this at once. It should, however, be remembered that the *mantra* is not to be repeated parrot-like. One should pour one's soul into it. The parrot repeats such *mantras* mechanically, we must repeat them intelligently in the hope of driving out undesirable thoughts and with full faith in the power of the *mantras* to assist us to do so.

— *Young India*. Dec 12, 1926.



MANY are the keys to health, and they are all quite essential ; but one thing needful, above all others, is *Brahmacharya*. Pure air, pure water, and wholesome food certainly contribute to health. But how can we be healthy if we expend all the health that we acquire ? How can we help being paupers if we spend all the money that we earn ? There can be no doubt that men and women can never be virile or strong unless they observe true *Brahmacharya*.

What, then, is *Brahmacharya* ? It means that men and women should refrain from carnal knowledge of each other. That is to say, they should not touch each other with a carnal thought, they should not think of it even in their dreams. Their mutual glances should be free from all suggestion of carnality. The hidden strength that God has given us should be conserved by rigid self-discipline, and transmitted into energy and power,—not merely of body, but also of mind and soul.

But what is the spectacle that we actually see around us ? Men and women, old and young, without exception, are caught in the meshes of sensuality. Blinded for the most part by lust, they lose all sense of right and wrong. I have myself seen even boys and girls behaving as if they were mad under its fatal influence. I too have behaved likewise under similar influences, and it could not well be otherwise. For the sake of a momentary pleasure, we sacrifice in an instant all the stock of vital energy that we have laboriously accumulated. The infatuation over, we find ourselves in a miserable condition. The next morning we feel hopelessly weak and tired, and the mind refuses to do its work. Then in order to remedy the mischief, we consume large quantities of milk, *bhasmas*, *yakutis* and what not. We take all sorts of 'nervine tonics' and place ourselves at the doctor's mercy for repairing the waste, and for recovering the capacity for enjoyment. So the days pass and years, until at length old age comes upon us, and finds us utterly emasculated in body and in mind.

But the Law of Nature is just the reverse of this. The older we grow the keener should our intellect be ; the longer we live, the greater should be our capacity to communicate the benefit of our accumulated experience to our fellowmen. And such

is indeed the case with those who have been true *Brahmacharis*. They know no fear of death, and they do not forget God even in this hour of death ; nor do they indulge in vain desires. They die with a smile on their lips, and boldly face the day of judgment. They are true men and women, and of them alone can it be said that they have conserved their health.

We hardly realise the fact that incontinence is the root-cause of most of the vanity, anger, fear and jealousy in the world. If our mind is not under our control, if we behave once or oftener every day more foolishly than even little children, what sins may we not commit consciously or unconsciously? How can we pause to think of the consequences of our actions, however vile or sinful they may be.

But you may ask, "Who has ever seen a true *Brahmachari* in this sense? If all men should turn *Brahmachari* would not humanity be extinct and the whole world go to rack and ruin?" We will leave aside the religious aspect of this question and discuss it simply from the secular point of view. To my mind, these questions only betray our timidity and worse. We have not the strength of will to observe *Brahmacharya*, and therefore set about finding pretexts for evading our duty. The race of true *Brahmacharis* is by no means extinct, but if they were commonly to be met with, of what value would *Brahmacharya* be? Thousands of hardy labourers have to go and dig deep into the bowels of the earth in search of diamonds and at length they get perhaps merely a handful of them out of heaps and heaps of rock. How much greater then, should be the labour involved in the discovery of the infinitely more precious diamond of a *Brahmachari*? If the observance of *Brahmacharya* should mean the end of the world, that is none of our business. Are we God that we should be so anxious about its future? He who created it will surely see to its preservation. We need not trouble to enquire whether other people practise *Brahmacharya* or not. When we enter a trade or profession, do we ever pause to consider what the fate of the world would be if all men were to do likewise? The true *Brahmachari* will, in the long run, discover for himself answers to such questions.

But how can men engross in the cares of the material world put these ideas into practice? What about those who

are married ? What shall they do who have children ? And what shall be done by those people who cannot control themselves ? We have already seen what is the highest state for us to attain. We should keep this constantly before us, and try to approach it to the utmost of our capacity. When little children are taught to write the letters of the alphabet, we show them the perfect shapes of the letters, and they try to reproduce them as best they can. In the same way, if we steadily work up to the idea of *Brahmacharya*, we may ultimately succeed in realising it. What if we have married already ? The law of nature is that *Brahmacharya* may be broken only when the husband and wife feel a desire for progeny. Those, who, remembering this law, violate *Brahmacharya* once in four or five years, will not become slaves to lust, nor lose much of their stock of vital energy. But alas ! how rare are those men and women who yield to the sexual craving merely for the sake of offspring ! The vast majority turn to sexual enjoyment merely to satisfy their carnal passion, the result that children are born to them is quite against their will. In the madness of sexual passion, they give no thought to the consequences of their acts. In this respect, men are even more to blame than women. The man is blinded so much by his lust that he never cares to remember that his wife is weak and unable to bear or rear up a child. In the West, indeed, people have transgressed all bounds. They indulge in sexual pleasures, and devise measures in order to evade the responsibilities of parenthood. Many books have been written on this subject, and a regular trade is being carried on in contraceptives. We are as yet free from this sin, but we do not shrink from imposing the heavy burden of maternity on our women, and we are not concerned even to find that our children are weak, impotent and imbecile. Every time we get a child, we offer thanksgiving prayers to God and so seek to hide from ourselves the wickedness of our acts. Should we do not rather deem it a sign of the wrath of God to have children who are feeble, sensual, crippled and timid ? Is it a matter for joy that mere boys and girls should have children ? Is not rather a curse ? We all know that the premature fruit of a too young plant weakens the parent, and so we try all means of delaying the appearance of fruit. But we sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God

when a child is born of a boy-father and a girl-mother ! Could anything be more dreadful ? Do we think that the world is going to be saved by the countless swarms of such impotent children endlessly multiplying in India or elsewhere ? Verily, we are in this respect, far worse than even the lower animals ; for in their case the male and the female are brought together solely with the object of breeding from them. Man and woman should regard it a sacred duty to keep apart from the moment of conception up to the time when the child is weaned. But we go on with our fatal merry-making blissfully forgetful of that sacred obligation. This almost incurable disease enfeebles our mind and leads us to an early grave, after making us drag a miserable existence for a short while. Married people should understand the true function of marriage, and should not violate *Brahmacharya* except with a view to progeny.

But it is so difficult under our present conditions of life. Our diet, our way of life, our common talk, and our environments are all equally calculated to rouse animal passions, and sensuality is like a poison eating into our vitals. Some people may doubt the possibility of our being able to free ourselves from this bondage.

From all that has been said, it follows that those who are still unmarried should try to remain so ; but if they cannot help marrying, they should defer it as long as possible. Young men, for instance, should take a vow to remain unmarried till the age of twenty-five or thirty. We cannot consider here all the advantages other than physical which they will reap and which are as it were added unto the rest.

My request to those parents who read this chapter is that they should not tie a mill-stone round the necks of their children by marrying them young. They should look to the welfare of the rising generation, and not merely seek to pamper their own vanity. They should cast aside all silly notions of family pride or respectability, and cease to indulge in such heartless practices. Let them rather, if they are true well-wishers of their children, look to their physical, mental and moral improvement. What greater disservice can they do to their progeny than compel them to enter upon married life, with all

its tremendous responsibilities and cares, while they are mere children ?

Then again the true laws of health demand that the man who loses his wife, as well as the woman that loses her husband, should remain single ever after. There is a difference of opinion among medical men as to whether young men and women need ever let their vital energy escape, some answering the question in the affirmative, others in the negative. But while doctors thus disagree we must not give way to over-indulgence from an idea that we are supported by medical authority. I can affirm, without the slightest hesitation, from my own experience as well as that of others, that sexual enjoyment is only not necessary for, but is positively injurious to health. All the strength of body and mind that has taken long to acquire is lost all at once by a single dissipation of the vital energy. It takes a long time to regain this lost vitality, and even then there is no saying that it can be thoroughly recovered. A broken mirror may be mended and made to do its work, but it can never be anything but a broken mirror.

As has already been pointed out, the preservation of our vitality is impossible without pure air, pure water, pure and wholesome food, as well as pure thoughts. So vital indeed is the relation between health and morals that we can never be perfectly healthy unless we lead a clean life. The earnest man, who, forgetting the errors of the past, begins to live a life of purity, will be able to reap the fruit of it straightaway. Those who practise true *Brahmacharya* even for a short period will see how their body and mind improve steadily in strength and power, and they will not at any cost be willing to part with this treasure. I have myself been guilty of lapses even after having fully understood the value of *Brahmacharya*, and have of course paid dearly for it. I am filled with shame and remorse when I think of the terrible contrast between my condition before and after these lapses. But from the errors of the past I have now learnt to preserve this treasure intact, and I fully hope, with God's grace, to continue to preserve it in the future, for I have, in my own person, experienced the inestimable benefits of *Brahmacharya*. I was married early, and had become the father of children as a mere youth. When at

length, I awoke to the reality of my situation, I found that I was steeped in ignorance about the fundamental laws of our being I shall consider myself amply rewarded for writing this chapter if at least a single reader takes a warning from my failings and experiences, and profits thereby Many people have told me—and I also believe it—that I am full of energy and enthusiasm, and that I am by no means weak in mind ; some even accuse me of strength bordering on obstinacy. Nevertheless there is still bodily and mental ill-health as a legacy of the past And yet, when compared with my friends, I may call myself healthy and strong If ever after twenty years of sensual enjoyment, I have been able to reach this state, how much better off should I have been if I had kept myself pure during those twenty years as well ? It is my full conviction, that if only I had lived a life of unbroken *Brahmacharya* all through, my energy and enthusiasm would have been a thousandfold greater and I should have been able to devote them all to the furtherance of my country's cause as my own If an imperfect *Brahmachari* like myself can reach such benefit, how much more wonderful must be the gain in power—physical, mental<sup>1</sup>, as well as moral—that unbroken *Brahmacharya* can bring to us !

When so strict is the law of *Brahmacharya*, what shall we say of those guilty of the unpardonable sin of illegitimate sexual enjoyment ? The evil arising from adultery and prostitution is a vital question of religion and morality and cannot be fully dealt with in a treatise on health. Here we are only concerned to point out how thousands who are guilty of these sins are afflicted by venereal diseases God is merciful in this that the punishment swiftly overtakes sinner Their short span of life is spent in abject bondage to quacks in a futile quest after a remedy for their ills If adultery and prostitution disappeared, at least half the present number of doctors would find their occupation gone. So inextricably indeed has venereal disease caught mankind in its clutches that thoughtful medical men have been forced to admit, that so long as adultery and prostitution continue, there is no hope for the human race, all the discoveries of curative medicine notwithstanding, the medicines for these diseases are so poisonous that although they may appear to have done some good for the time being, they

give rise to other and still more terrible diseases which are transmitted from generation to generation

In concluding this chapter which has grown longer than I expected, let me briefly point out how married people can observe *Brahmacharya*. It is not enough to observe the laws of health as regards air, water and food. The husband should avoid privacy with his wife. Little reflection is needed to show that the only possible motive for privacy between husband and wife is the desire for sexual enjoyment. They should occupy separate rooms at night, and be constantly engaged in good work during the day. They should read such books as fill them with noble thoughts and meditate over the lives of great men, and live in the constant realisation of the fact that sensual enjoyment is the root of much misery. Whenever they feel a craving for sexual indulgence, they should bathe in cold water, so that the heat of passion may be cooled down, and be refined into the energy of virtuous activity. This is a difficult thing to do, but we have been born to wrestle with difficulties and conquer them, and he who has not the will to do so can never enjoy the supreme blessing of true health \*

THE third among our observances is *Brahmacharya*. As a matter of fact all observances are deducible from Truth, and are meant to subserve it. The man, who is wedded to Truth and worships Truth alone, proves unfaithful to her, if he applies his talents to anything else. How then can he minister to the senses? A man, whose activities are wholly consecrated to the realization of Truth, which requires utter selflessness, can have no time for the selfish purpose of begetting children and running a household. Realization of Truth through self-gratification should, after what has been said before, appear a contradiction of terms.

If we look at it from the standpoint of *ahimsa* (non-violence), we find that the fulfilment of *ahimsa* is impossible without utter selflessness. *Ahimsa* means Universal Love. If a man gives his love to one woman, or a woman to one man, what is there left for all the world besides? It simply means, "We two first,

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\*(Translation of a chapter in the author's Gujarati book on health (Part I, Chapter IX))

and the devil take all the rest of them" As a faithful wife must be prepared to sacrifice her all for the sake of her husband, and a faithful husband for the sake of his wife, it is clear that such persons cannot rise to the height of Universal Love, or look upon all mankind as kith and kin For they have created a boundary-wall round their love. The larger their family, the farther are they from Universal Love. Hence one who would obey the law of *ahimsa* cannot marry, not to speak of gratification outside the marital bond.

Then what about people who are already married ? Will they never be able to realize Truth ? Can they never offer up their all at the altar of humanity ? There is a way out for them They can behave as if they were not married. Those who have enjoyed this happy condition will be able to bear me out Many have to my knowledge successfully tried the experiment If the married couple can think of each other as brother and sister, they are freed for universal service The very thought that all the women in the world are one's sisters, mothers or daughters will at once ennable a man and snap his chains The husband and wife do not lose anything here, but only add to their resources and even to their family There love becomes free from the impurity of lust and so grows stronger With the disappearance of this impurity, they can serve each other better and the occasions for quarrel become fewer. There are more occasions for quarrel where the love is selfish and bounded

If the foregoing argument is appreciated, a consideration of the physical benefits of chastity becomes a matter of secondary importance How foolish it is intentionally to dissipate vital energy in sensual enjoyment ! It is a grave misuse to fritter away for physical gratification that which is given to man and woman for the full development of their bodily and mental powers Such misuse is the root cause of many a disease

*Brahmacharya*, like all other observances must be observed in thought, word and deed We are told in the *Gita*, and experience will corroborate the statement, that the foolish man, who appears to control his body but is nursing evil thoughts in his mind, makes a vain effort. It may be harmful to suppress the body, if the mind is at the same time allowed to go astray. Where the mind wanders, the body must follow sooner or later.

It is necessary here to appreciate a distinction. It is one thing to allow the mind to harbour impure thoughts ; it is a different thing altogether if it strays among them in spite of ourselves. Victory will be ours in the end, if we non-co-operate with the mind in its evil wanderings.

We experience every moment of our lives that often while the body is subject to our control, the mind is not. This physical control should never be relaxed, and in addition we must put forth a constant endeavour to bring the mind under control. We can do nothing more, nothing less. If we give way to the mind, the body and the mind will pull different ways and we shall be false to ourselves. Body and mind may be said to go together, so long as we continue to resist the approach of every evil thought.

The observance of *Brahmacharya* has been believed to be very difficult, almost impossible. In trying to find a reason for this belief, we see that the term *Brahmacharya* has been taken in a narrow sense. Mere control of animal passion has been thought to be tantamount to observing *Brahmacharya*. I feel that this conception is incomplete and wrong. *Brahmacharya* means control of all the organs of sense. He who attempts to control only one organ and allows all the others free play, is bound to find his effort futile. To hear suggestive stories with the ears, to see suggestive sights with the eyes, to taste stimulating food with the tongue, to touch exciting things with the hands, and then at the same time expect to control the only remaining organ, is like putting one's hands in a fire and then expecting to escape being burnt. He, therefore, who is resolved to control the one, must be likewise determined to control the rest. I have always felt that much harm has been done by the narrow definition of *Brahmacharya*. If we practise simultaneous self-control in all directions, the attempt will be scientific and possible of success. Perhaps the palate is the chief sinner. That is why in the *Ashram* we have assigned to control of the palate a separate place among our observances.

Let us remember the root meaning of *Brahmacharya*. *Charya* means course of conduct, *Brahmacharya* conduce, adapted to the search of *Brahma*, i.e., Truth. From this etymological meaning arises the special meaning, viz., control of all the senses.

We must entirely forget the incomplete definition which restricts itself to the sexual aspect only.

—From *Yeravda Mandir*, Ch III.



I HAVE been asked to say a few words about *Brahmacharya*. There are some subjects which I occasionally discuss in the pages of *Navajivan*, but which I rarely deal with in my speeches. *Brahmacharya* is one of these. I hardly ever speak about it, as I know that it cannot be explained by words and is a very difficult subject. You wish me to speak about *Brahmacharya* in the general restricted acceptance of the term, not about *Brahmacharya* with the wider significance of control of all the senses. Even the observance of *Brahmacharya* as ordinarily understood is described in the *Shastras* as a hard task. This is true in the main, but I may be permitted to make a few observations which point the other way. *Brahmacharya* appears to be difficult because we do not control the other senses. Take for example the organ of taste which leads the rest. *Brahmacharya* will come easy to anyone who controls his palate. Zoologists tell us that *Brahmacharya* is observed by the lower animals, as for instance cattle, to a greater extent than by human beings, and this is a fact. The reason is that cattle have perfect control over the palate, not by will but by instinct. They subsist on mere fodder, and of this too, they take a quantity just sufficient for nutrition. They eat to live, do not live to eat, while our case is just the reverse. The mother pampers her child with all kinds of delicacies. She believes that she can evince her love only by feeding the child to the utmost. By doing this she does not enhance the child's enjoyment of his food but on the other hand makes everything insipid and disgusting for him. The taste depends upon hunger. Even sweets will not be as tasteful to one who is not hungry as a slice of dry bread is to another who is really so. We prepare food in various ways with a variety of spices in order to be able to load the stomach, and wonder why we find *Brahmacharya* difficult to observe.

We misuse and corrupt the eyes which God has given us. We do not direct them to the right things. Why should not the mother learn *Gayatri* and teach it to the child? She need not

trouble with the inner and deeper meaning of the *mantra*. It is enough for her to understand and explain to the child that it inculcates reverence for the sun. This is but a rough interpretation of the *mantra* which I am placing before you. How shall we revere the sun? By looking up to the sun and performing an ablution as it were of the eyes. The author of the *Gayatri* was a *Rishi*, a seer. He taught us that nowhere else can we see such a beautiful drama as is daily staged before our eyes at the time of sunrise. There is no stage-manager greater than God or more sublime, and there is no more magnificent stage than the sky. But where is the mother who washes her child's eyes and then asks him to have a look at the sky? Mothers in our country are unfortunately concerned with quite other things. The boy may perhaps turn out to be a big official, thanks to his education at school, but we are apt to ignore the very large part which the home atmosphere plays in his education. Parents wrap their children up in heavy clothing and smother them while they fondly imagine that they are adding to their beauty. Clothes are meant just to cover the body, protect it against heat and cold, not to beautify it. If a child is trembling with cold, we must send him to the fireside to warm himself or out into the street for a run, or into the field for work. It is only thus that we can help him to build a splendid constitution. By keeping the child confined in the house we impart a false warmth to his body. By pampering his body we only succeed in destroying it.

So much for the clothes. Then again, the light conversation carried on in the house creates a very harmful impression on the child's mind. Elders talk of getting him married. The things which he sees around him also tend to corrupt him. The wonder is that we have not sunk to the lowest depths of barbarism. Restraint is observed in spite of conditions which render it well-nigh impossible. A gracious Providence has so arranged things that man is saved in spite of himself. If we remove all these obstacles in the way of *Brahmacharya*, it not only becomes possible but also easy to observe.

We are thus weak and yet we have to compete with a world of men physically stronger than ourselves. There are two ways of doing this. the one godly, and the other satanic. The satanic

way is to adopt all measures right or wrong developing the body, such as beef-eating etc. A friend of my childhood used to say that we must take meat, and that otherwise we could not develop our physique so as to meet the English on equal terms. Beef-eating became the vogue in Japan when the time came for her to face other nations. We must follow in her wake if we wish to build our bodies in the satanic way.

But if we build up our bodies in the godly way, the only means at our disposal is *Brahmacharya*. I pity myself when people call me a *Naishthika Brahmachari*. How could such description apply to one who, like me, is married and has children? A *Naishthika Brahmachari* would never suffer from fever, headache, cough or appendicitis, as I have suffered. Medical men say that appendicitis is caused even by an orange-seed remaining in the intestines. But an orange-seed cannot find permanent lodgment in a clean healthy body. When the intestines get weakened they are unable to expel such foreign matter. My intestines too must have weakened and hence the inception of appendicitis in me. Children eat all sorts of things and the mother can never watch them all the time. Yet they do not suffer as their intestines are functioning vigorously. Let no one therefore mistake me for a *Naishthika Brahmachari*, who should be made of infinitely sterner stuff. I am not an ideal *Brahmachari* although I aspire to be one.

*Brahmacharya* does not mean that one may not touch a woman, even one's sister, in any circumstance whatsoever. But it does mean that one's state of mind should be as calm and unruffled during such contact as when one touches say, a piece of paper. A man's *Brahmacharya* avails for nothing if he must hesitate in nursing his sister who is ill. He has to be as free from excitement in case of contact with the fairest damsels on earth as in contact with a dead body. If you wish your children to attain such *Brahmacharya*, the framing of their curriculum must not rest with you but with a *Brahmachari* like myself, imperfect as I am.

A *Brahmachari* is a *Sannyasi* by nature, *Brahmacharyashram* is superior to *Sannyasa*, but we have thoroughly degraded it, and hence the degradation of *Grihasthashram* as well as *Vanaprasth-*

ashram, and the disappearance of *Sannyasa* Such is our sorry plight \*



THE word in Sanskrit corresponding to celibacy is *Brahmacharya*, and the latter means much more than celibacy *Brahmacharya* means perfect control over all the senses and organs For the perfect *Brahmachari* nothing is impossible But it is an ideal state which is rarely realised It is almost like Euclid's line which exists only in imagination never capable of being physically drawn It is nevertheless an important definition in geometry yielding great result So may a perfect *Brahmachari* exist only in imagination But if we did not keep him constantly before our mind's eye, we should be like a rudderless ship The nearer the approach to the imaginary state the greater the perfection

But for the time being, I propose to confine myself to *Brahmacharya* as in the sense of celibacy I hold that a life of perfect continence in thought, speech and action is necessary for reaching spiritual perfection And the nation that does not possess such men is a poorer for the want But my purpose is to plead for *Brahmacharya* as a temporary necessity in the present stage of national evolution

We have more than an ordinary share of disease, famines and pauperism—even starvation among millions We are being ground down under slavery in such a subtle manner that many of us refused even to recognise it as such, and mistake our state as one of progressive freedom in spite of the triple curse of economic, mental and moral drain The ever growing military expenditure, the injurious fiscal policy purposely designed to benefit Lancashire and other British interests, and the extravagant manner of running the various departments of the state constitute a tax on India which has deepened her poverty and reduced her capacity for withstanding diseases The manner of administration has, in Gokhale's words stunted national growth so much that the tallest of us have to bend

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\*Translation by V G Desai of a Gujarati speech before the Seva Samaj, Bhadran, reported in *Navajivan*, 26th February, 1925.

India was even made to crawl on her belly in Amritsar. The studied insult of the Punjab and the refusal to apologise for the insolent breach of the pledged word to Indian Musalmans are the most recent examples of the moral drain. They hurt the very soul within us. The process of emasculation would be complete, if we submitted to those two wrongs.

It is right for us who know the situation to bring forth children in an atmosphere so debasing as I have described? We only multiply slaves and weaklings, if we continue the process of procreation whilst we feel and remain helpless, diseased and famine-stricken. Not till India has become a free nation, able to withstand avoidable starvation, well able to feed herself in times of famine, possessing the knowledge to deal with malaria, cholera, influenza and other epidemics, have we the right to bring forth progeny. I must not conceal from the reader the sorrow I feel when I hear of births in this land. I must confess that for years I have contemplated with satisfaction the prospect of suspending procreation by voluntary self-denial. India is to-day ill-equipped for taking care even of her present population, not because she is over-populated, but because she is forced to foreign domination whose creed is progressive exploitation of her resources.

How is the suspension of procreation to be brought about? Not by immoral and artificial checks that are resorted to in Europe, but by a life of discipline and self-control. Parents must teach their children the practice of *Brahmacharya*. According to the Hindu *Shastras* the lowest age at which boys may marry is 25. If the mothers of India could be inclined to believe that it is sinful to train boys and girls for a married life, half the marriages of India will automatically stop. Nor need we believe the fetish of early puberty among girls because of our hot climate. I have never known a grosser superstition than this of early puberty. I make bold to say that the climate has absolutely nothing to do with puberty. What does bring about untimely puberty is the mental and moral atmosphere surrounding our family life. Mothers and other relations make it a religious duty to teach innocent children that they are to be married when they reach a particular age. They are betrothed when they are infants, or even babes in arms. The dress and the food of

the children are also aids to stimulating passions. We dress our children like dolls, not for their but for our pleasure and vanity. I have brought up children by the score. And they have without difficulty taken to and delighted in any dress given to them. We provide them with all kinds of heating and stimulating foods. Our blind love takes no note of their capacity. The result undoubtedly is an early adolescence, immature progeny and an early grave. Parents furnish an object lesson which the children easily grasp. By reckless indulgence in their passions they serve for their children as models of unrestrained licence. Every untimely addition to the family is ushered in amid trumpets of joy and feasting. The wonder is that we are not less restrained than we are, notwithstanding our surroundings. I have not a shadow of doubt that married people, if they wished well to the country and wanted to see India become a nation of strong and handsome full-formed men and women, would practise perfect self-restraint and cease to procreate for the time being. I tender this advice even to the newly-married. It is easier not to do a thing at all than to cease doing it, even as it is easier for a life abstainer to remain teetotaller than for a drunkard or even a temperate man to abstain. To remain erect is infinitely easier than to rise from a fall. It is wrong to say that continence can be safely preached only to the satiated. There is hardly any meaning, either, in preaching continence to an enfeebled person. And my point is that whether we are young or old, satiated or not, it is our duty at the present moment to suspend bringing forth heirs to our slavery.

May I point out to parents that they ought not to fall into the argumentative trap of the rights of partners? Consent is required for indulgence, never for restraint, this is an obvious truth

—*Young India* Oct 13, 1920.



ONCE the idea that the only and grand function of the sexual organ is generation, possesses man and woman, union for any other purpose they will hold as criminal waste of the vital fluid and consequent excitement caused to man and woman as an equally criminal waste of precious energy. It is now easy to understand why the scientists of old have put such

great value upon the vital fluid and why they have insisted upon its strong transmutation into the highest form of energy for the benefit of society. They boldly declare that one who has acquired a perfect control over his or her sexual energy strengthens the whole being, physical, mental and spiritual, and attains powers unattainable by any other means

Let not the reader be disturbed by the absence of many or even any living specimens of real *brahmacharis*. The *brahmacharis* we see about us to-day are very incomplete specimens. At best they are aspirants who have acquired control over their bodies but not their minds. They have not become proof against temptation. This is not because *brahmacharya* is so difficult of attainment. Social environment is against them, and the majority of those who are making an honest effort unknowingly isolate the control of the animal passion from all other passions, whereas the effort to be successful must include control over all the passions to which man is prey. Whilst *brahmacharya* is not impossible of attainment by the average man and woman, it must not be supposed that it requires less effort than that required by an average student who has set his heart upon becoming a master of any one of the sciences. Attainment of *brahmacharya* in the sense here meant means mastery of the Science of life.

—*Harijan* Mar. 21, 1936.



A SUBSTANCE that is capable of producing such a wonderful being as man cannot but, when properly conserved, be transmuted into matchless energy and strength. Anyone can test for himself the truth of this observation of the *shastras* for himself by personal experience. And the rule holds good in respect of woman no less than man. The real difficulty, however, is that we vainly expect to be free from outward manifestations of lust, while harbouring it in our minds, with the result that physically and mentally we become utter wrecks, and our lives, in the words of the *Gita*, become a living lie or hypocrisy personified.

—*Harijan* : Mar. 20, 1937



THE horror with which ancient literature has regarded the fruitless use of the vital fluid was not a superstition born of

ignorance. What shall we say of a husbandman who will sow the finest seed in his possession on stony ground or of the owner of a field who will receive, in his field rich with fine soil, good seed under conditions that will make it impossible for it to grow? God has blessed man with seed that has the highest potency and woman with a field richer than the richest earth to be found anywhere on this globe. Surely it is criminal folly for man to allow his most precious possession to run to waste. He must guard it with a care greater than he will bestow upon the richest pearls in his possession. And so is a woman guilty of criminal folly who will receive the seed in her life-producing field with the deliberate intention of letting it run to waste. Both he and she will be judged guilty of misuse of the talents given to them and they will be dispossessed of what they have been given. Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity. Contraceptives of a kind there were before and there will be hereafter, but the use of them was formerly regarded as sinful. It was reserved for our generation to glorify vice by calling it virtue. The greatest disservice protagonists of contraceptives are rendering to the youth of India is to fill their minds with what appears to me to be wrong ideology. Let the young men and women of India, who hold her destiny in their hands, beware of this false god and guard the treasure with which God has blessed them and use it, if they wish, for the only purpose for which it is intended.

—Harijan • Mar 28, 1936



I MUST confess that the observance of the law of continence is impossible without a living faith in God which is living Truth. It is the fashion nowadays to dismiss God from life altogether and insist on the possibility of reaching the highest kind of life without the necessity of a living faith in a living God. I must confess my inability to drive the truth of the law home to those who have no faith in and no need for a Power infinitely higher than themselves. My own experience has let me to the knowledge that fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living Law in obedience to which

the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life

—*Harijan* : April 25, 1936.



THERE is nothing in our society to-day which would conduce to self-control Our very upbringing is against it. The primary concern of parents is to marry their children anyhow so that they may breed like rabbits If they are girls, they are married at as early an age as they conveniently can be, irrespective of their moral welfare The marriage ceremony is one long-drawn out agony of feasting and frivolity. The house-holder's life is in keeping with the past life It is a prolongation of self-indulgence Holidays and social enjoyments are so arranged as to allow one the greatest latitude for sensuous living The literature that is almost thrust on one generally panders to the animal passion The most modern literature almost teaches that indulgence in it is a duty and total abstinence a sin

Is it any wonder if control of the sexual appetite has become difficult if not almost impossible?

—*Harijan* : Mar. 21, 1936.



INNOCENT youth is a priceless possession not to be squandered away for the sake of a momentary excitement, miscalled pleasure.

—*Harijan* . Sept. 21, 1935.



STEAM becomes a mighty power only when it allows itself to be imprisoned in a strong little reservoir and produces tremendous motion and carries huge weights by permitting itself a tiny and measured outlet Even so have the youth of the country of their own free will to allow their inexhaustible energy to be imprisoned, controlled and set free in strictly-measured and required quantities — *Young India* Oct. 3, 1929.



A YOUNG man should never give way to despondency.

He should have self-confidence enough to know that real merit never goes unrewarded. —*Young India* : May 28, 1929.



MAN is a fallible being He can never be sure of his steps —*Young India* : Sept 25, 1924.



MANLINESS consists of making circumstances subservient to ourselves Those who will not heed themselves perish. To understand this principle is not to be impatient not to reproach Fate, not to blame others He who understands the doctrine of self-help blames himself for failure.

THE main purpose of life is to live rightly, think rightly, act rightly, the soul must languish when we give all our thought to the body. —*Harijan* : Feb 27, 1936.





PART IV

**From Strength to Power**



*I am the wisdom of the wise and the strength of the strong. And I am the power of the powerful who in action are free from desire and longing ; in all creatures I am desire regulated by moral fitness. Know also that the dispositions arising from the three qualities, Sattva, Rajas, and tamas are from me ; they are in me, but I am not in them*

—*BHAGAVAD GITA*  
( *Chapter VII* )



## PART IV

# From Strength to Power

When we are engaged in a death grip with a powerful government, we shall need all the strength—physical, material, moral and spiritual. We cannot gain it unless we husband the one thing which we must prize above everything else. Without this personal purity of life, we must remain a nation of slaves. Let us not deceive ourselves by imagining, that because we consider the system of government to be corrupt, Englishmen are to be despised as competitors in a race for personal virtue. Without making any spiritual parade of the fundamental virtues, they practise them at least physically in an abundant measure. Among those who are engaged in the political life of the country there are more celibates and spinsters than among us. Spinsterhood among us are practically unknown, except the nuns who leave no impression on the political life of the country, whereas in Europe, thousands claim celibacy as a common virtue.

I now place before the reader a few simple rules which are based on the experience not only of myself, but of many of my associates.

1 Boys and girls should be brought up simply and naturally in the full belief that they are and can remain innocent.

2 All should abstain from heating and stimulating foods, condiments such as chillies, fatty and concentrated foods such as fritters, sweets and fried substances.

3 Husband and wife should occupy separate rooms and avoid privacy.

4 Both body and mind should be constantly and healthily occupied.

5 Early to bed and early to rise should be strictly observed.

6. All unclean literature should be avoided. The antidote for unclean thoughts is clean thoughts.

7. Theatres, cinemas, etc., which tend to stimulate passion, should be shunned.

8. Nocturnal dreams need not cause any anxiety. A cold bath every time for a fairly strong person is the finest preventive in such cases. It is wrong to say that an occasional indulgence is a safeguard against involuntary dreams.

9. Above all, one must not consider continence even as between husband and wife to be so difficult as to be practically impossible. On the contrary, self-restraint must be considered to be the ordinary and natural practice of life.

10. A heartfelt prayer every day for purity makes one progressively pure

—Young India : Oct 13, 1920.



**BRAHMACHARYA** is not mere mechanical celibacy, it means complete control over all the senses and freedom from lust in thought, word and deed. As such it is the royal road to self-realisation or attainment of *Brahma*.

The ideal *Brahmachari* has not to struggle with sensual desire for procreation, it never troubles him at all. The whole world will be to him one vast family ; he will centre all his ambition in relieving the misery of mankind, and the desire for procreation will be to him as gall and wormwood. He who has realised the misery of mankind in all its magnitude will never be stirred by passion. He will instinctively know the fountain of strength in him, and he will ever persevere to keep it undefiled. His humble strength will command respect of the world, and he will wield an influence greater than that of the sceptred monarch.

But I am told that this is an impossible ideal, that I do not take count of the natural attraction between man and woman. I refuse to believe that the sensual affinity, referred to here, can be at all regarded as natural ; in that case the deluge would soon be over us. The natural affinity between man and woman is the attraction between brother and sister, mother and son, or father and daughter. It is this natural attraction that

sustains the world I should find it impossible to live, much less carry on my work, if I did not regard the whole of womankind as sisters, daughters or mothers If I looked at them with lustful eyes, it would be the surest way to perdition

Procreation is a natural phenomenon indeed, but within specific limits A transgression of those limits imperils woman-kind, emasculates the race, induces disease, puts a premium on vice and makes the world ungodly A man in the grip of the sensual desire is a man without moorings If such a one were to guide society, to flood it with his writings, and men were to be swayed by them, where would society be? And yet we have that very thing happening to-day Supposing a moth whirling round a light were to record the moments of its fleeting joy and we were to imitate it, regarding it as an example, where would we be? No I must declare with all the power I can command that sensual attraction even between husband and wife is unnatural. Marriage is meant to cleanse the hearts of the couple of sordid passion and take them nearer to God Lustless love between husband and wife is not impossible Man is not a brute He has risen to a higher state after countless births in the brute creation He is born to stand, not to walk on all fours or crawl Bestiality is as far removed from manhood as matter from spirit

In conclusion I shall summarise the means to its attainment.

The first step is the realisation of its necessity

The next is gradual control of the senses A *Brahmachari* must needs control his palate He must eat to live, and not for enjoyment He must see only clean things and close his eyes before anything unclean It is thus a sign of polite breeding to walk with one's eyes towards the ground and not wandering about from object to object A *Brahmachari* will likewise hear nothing obscene or unclean, smell no strong, stimulating things The smell of clean earth is far sweeter than the fragrance of artificial scents and essences Let the aspirant to *Brahmacharya* also keep his hands and feet engaged in all the walking hours in healthful activity Let him also fast occasionally

The third step is to have clean companions, clean friends and clean books

The last and not the least is prayer. Let him repeat *Ramanama* with all his heart regularly every day, and ask for divine grace

None of these things is difficult for an average man or woman. They are simplicity itself. But their very simplicity is embarrassing. Where there is a will, the way is simple enough. Men have not the will for it and hence vainly grope. The fact, that the world rests on the observance, more or less, of *Brahmacharya* or restraint, means that it is necessary and practicable.

—*Young India* . June 27, 1928



AS an external aid to *Brahmacharya*, fasting is as necessary as selection and restriction in diet. So overpowering are the senses that they can be kept under control only when they are completely hedged in on all sides, from above and from beneath. It is common knowledge that they are powerless without food, and so fasting undertaken with a view to control of the senses is, I have no doubt, very helpful. With some, fasting is of no avail, because assuming that mechanical fasting alone will make them immune, they keep their bodies without food, but feast their minds upon all sorts of delicacies, thinking all the while as to what they will eat and what they will drink after the fast terminates. Such fasting helps them in controlling neither palate nor lust. Fasting is useful when mind co-operates with starving body ; that is to say, when it cultivates a distaste for the objects that are denied to the body. Mind is at the root of all sensuality. Fasting, therefore, has a limited use, for a fasting man may continue to be swayed by passion. But it may be said that extinction of the sexual passion is as a rule impossible without fasting, which may be said to be indispensable for the observance of *Brahmacharya*. Many aspirants after *Brahmacharya* fail, because in the use of their other senses they want to carry on as those who are not *Brahmacharis*. Their effort is, therefore, identical with the effort to experience the bracing cold of winter in the scorching summer months. There should be a clear line between the life of a *Brahmachari* and of one who is not. The resemblance that there is between the two is only apparent. The distinction ought to be clear as daylight. Both use their eyesight, but whereas the *Brahmachari*

uses it to see the glories of God the other uses it to see the frivolity around him Both use their ears, but whereas the one hears nothing but praises of God, the other feasts his ears upon ribaldry Both often keep late hours, but whereas the one devotes them to prayer, the other fritters them away in wild and wasteful mirth Both feed the inner man, but the one does so only to keep the temple of God in good repair, while the other gorges himself and makes the sacred vessel a stinking gutter Thus both live as the poles apart, and the distance between them will grow and not diminish with the passage of time

*Brahmacharya* means control of the senses in thought, word and deed Every day I have been realising more and more the necessity for restraints of the kind I have detailed above There is no limit to the possibilities of renunciation, even as there is none to those of *Brahmacharya* Such *Brahmacharya* is impossible of attainment by limited effort. For many, it must remain only as an ideal An aspirant after *Brahmacharya* will always be conscious of his shortcomings, will seek out the passions lingering in the innermost recesses of his heart, and will incessantly strive to get rid of them So long as thought is not under complete control of the will, *Brahmacharya* in its fulness is absent Involuntary thought is an affection of the mind, and curbing of thought therefore means curbing of the mind which is even more difficult to curb than the wind Nevertheless the existence of God within makes even control of the mind possible Let no one think that it is impossible because it is difficult It is the highest goal, and it is no wonder that the highest effort should be necessary to attain it.

But it was after coming to India that I realised that such *Brahmacharya* was impossible to attain merely by human effort Until then I had been labouring under the delusion that fruit diet alone would enable me to eradicate all passions, and I had flattered myself with the belief that I had nothing more to do

Let me make it clear that those, who desire to observe *Brahmacharya* with a view to realising God, need not despair, provided their faith in God is equal to their confidence to their own effort.

*'The sense-objects turn away from abstemious soul, leaving the relish behind. The relish also disappears with the realisation of the Highest'* Therefore His name and His grace are the last resources of the aspirant after *moksha* Truth came to me only after my return to India

*Chapter VIII ; My Experiments with Truth.*



A CONGRESS leader said to me the other day, in course of our conversation :

"How is it that in quality the Congress is not what it used to be in 1930-25 ? It has deteriorated. Ninety per cent of the members are not carrying out the Congress discipline Can you not do something to mend this state of things ?"

The question is apposite and timely. I can't shirk responsibility by saying, I am no longer in the Congress I have gone out of it for purpose of serving it better I know that I still influence the Congress policy As the author of the Congress Constitution of 1920 I must hold myself responsible for such deterioration as is avoidable

The Congress started with an initial handicap in 1920. Very few believed in truth and non-violence as a creed Most members accepted them as a policy It was inevitable I had hoped that many would accept them as their creed after they had watched the working of the Congress under the new policy Only some did, not many In the beginning stages the change that came over the foremost leaders was profound. Readers will recall the letters from the late Pandit Motilal Nehru and Deshbandhu Das reproduced in *Young India* They had experienced a new joy and a new hope in a life of self-denial, simplicity and self-sacrifice The Ali Brothers had almost become *faqirs* As we toured from place to place, I watched with delight the change that was coming over the brothers What was true of these four leaders was true of many others whom I can name The enthusiasm of the leaders had infected the rank and file

But this phenomenal change was due to the spell of '*Swaraj*' in one year. The conditions I had attached to the

fulfilment of the formula were forgotten. Khwaja Saheb Abdul Majid even went so far as to suggest that, as the general of the *Satyagraha* army which the Congress had then become, and still is (if only Congressmen realize the meaning of *Satyagraha*), I should have made sure that the conditions were such that they would be fulfilled. Perhaps he was right. Only I had no such prevision in me. The use of non-violence on a mass scale and for political purposes was even for myself an experiment. I could not therefore dogmatize. My conditions were meant to be a measure of popular response. They might or might not be fulfilled. Mistakes, miscalculations were always possible. Be that as it may, when the fight for *Swaraj* became prolonged and *Khilafat* ceased to be a live issue, enthusiasm began to wane, confidence in non-violence even as a policy began to be shaken, and untruth crept in. People who had no faith in the twin virtues or the *khadi* clause, stole in, and many even openly defied the Congress Constitution.

The evil has continued to grow. The Working Committee has been making some attempt to purge the Congress of the evil, but has not been able to put its foot down and risk the loss of numbers on the Congress register. I myself believe in quality rather than quantity.

But there is no such thing as compulsion in the scheme of non-violence. Reliance has to be placed upon ability to reach the intellect and the heart—the latter rather than the former.

It follows that there must be power in the word of a *Satyagraha* general—not the power that the possession of limitless arms gives, but the power that purity of life, strict vigilance and ceaseless application produce. This is impossible without the observance of *Brahmacharya*. It must be as full as it is humanly possible. *Brahmacharya* here does not mean mere physical self-control. It means much more. It means complete control over all the senses. Thus an impure thought is a breach of *Brahmacharya*, so is anger. All power comes from the preservation and sublimation of the vitality that is responsible for creation of life. If the vitality is husbanded instead of being dissipated, it is transmuted into creative energy of the highest order. This vitality is continuously and even

unconsciously dissipated by evil or even rambling, disorderly unwanted thoughts. And since thought is the root of all speech and action, the quality of the latter corresponds to that of the former. Hence perfectly controlled thought is itself power of highest potency and can become self-acting. That seems to me to be the meaning of the silent prayer of the heart. If man is after the image of God, he has but to will a thing in the limited sphere allotted to him and it becomes. Such power is impossible in one who dissipates his energy in any way whatsoever, even as steam kept in a leaky pipe yields no power. The sexual act divorced from the deliberate purpose of generation is a typical and gross form of dissipation and has therefore been specially and rightly chosen for condemnation. But in one who has to organize vast masses of mankind for non-violent action the full control described by me has to be attempted and virtually achieved.

This control is unattainable save by the grace of God. There is a verse in the second chapter of the *Gita* which freely rendered means : ‘ *Sense effects remain in abeyance whilst one is fasting or whilst the particular sense is starved, but the hankering does not cease except upon when one sees God face to face.*’ This control is not mechanical or temporary. Once attained it is never lost. In that state vital energy is stored up without any chance of escaping by the innumerable outlets.

It has been said that such *Brahmacharya*, if it is all attainable, can be so only by cave-dwellers. A *Brahmachari*, it is said, should never see, much less touch, a woman. Doubtless a *Brahmachari* may not think of, speak of, see or touch a woman lustfully. But the prohibition one finds in books on *Brahmacharya* is mentioned without the important adverb. The reason for the omission seems to be that man is no impartial judge in such matters and, therefore, cannot say when he is or is not affected by such contacts. Cupid’s visitations are often unperceivable. Difficult though, therefore, *Brahmacharya* is of observance when one freely mixes with the world, it is not of much value, if it is attainable only, by retirement from the world.

Anyway, I have practised *Brahmacharya* for over thirty years with considerable success though living in the midst of activities.

After the decision to lead the life a *Brahmachari* there was little change in my outward practice, except with my wife. In the course of my work among the Indians in South Africa, I mixed freely with women. There was hardly an Indian woman in the Transvaal and Natal whom I did not know. They were so many sisters and daughters to me. My *Brahmacharya* was not derived from books. I evolved my own rules for my guidance and that of those who, at my invitation, had joined me in the experiment. If I have not followed the prescribed restrictions, much less have I accepted the description, found even in religious literature of woman as the source of all evil and temptation. Owing as I do all the good there may be in me to my mother, I have looked upon woman, never as an object for satisfaction of sexual desire, but always with the veneration due to my own mother. Man is the tempter and aggressor. It is not woman whose touch defiles man but he is often himself too impure to touch her. But recently a doubt has seized me as to the nature of the limitations that a *Brahmachari* *Brahmacharini* should put upon himself or herself regarding contacts with the opposite sex. I have set limitations which do not satisfy me. What they should be I do not know. I am experimenting. I have never claimed to have been a perfect *Brahmachari* of my definition. I have not acquired that control over my thoughts that I need for my researches in non-violence. If my non-violence is to be contagious and infectious, I must acquire greater control over my thoughts. There is perhaps a flaw somewhere which accounts for the apparent failure of leadership adverted to in the opening sentence of this writing.

My faith in non-violence remains as strong as ever. I am quite sure that not only should it answer all our requirements in our country, but that it should, if properly applied, prevent the bloodshed that is going on outside India and is threatening to overwhelm the Western world.

My aspiration is limited. God has not given me the power to guide the world on the path of non-violence. But I have imagined that He has chosen me as His instrument for presenting non-violence to India for dealing with her many ills. The progress already made is great. But much more remains to be

done. And yet I seem to have lost the power to evoke the needed response from Congressmen in general. It is a bad carpenter who quarrels with his tools. It is a bad general who blames his men for faulty workmanship. I know I am not a bad general. I have wisdom enough to know my limitations. God will give me strength enough to declare my bankruptcy, if such is to be my lot. He will perhaps take me away when I am no longer wanted for the work which I have been permitted to do for nearly half a century. But I do entertain the hope that there is yet work for me to do, that the darkness that seems to have enveloped me will disappear, and that whether with another battle more brilliant than the Dandi March or without, India will come to her own demonstrably through non-violent means. I am praying for the light that will dispel the darkness. Let those who have a living faith in non-violence join me in the prayer. —*Harijan* • July 23, 1938



RESTRAINT never ruins one's health. What ruins ones' health is not restraint but outward suppression. A really self-restrained person grows every day from strength to strength and from peace to more peace. The very first step in self-restraint is the restraint of thoughts. —*Harijan* • April 24, 1937



FROM what, however, I have discovered from the letters that regularly come to me from inquirers I would like to issue this definite warning. Those who believe in self-restraint must not become hypochondriacs. The letters that come to me show that many correspondents brood over their ill-success in the exercise of self-restraint. Like everything else that is good, self-restraint too requires an inexhaustible store of patience. There is absolutely no reason to despond, and there must be no brooding. There should be no conscious effort to drive away evil thoughts. That process is itself a kind of indulgence.

The best prescription perhaps is non-resistance, i.e., ignoring the existence of evil thoughts and a continuous pre-occupation with duties that lie in front of one. This presupposes the existence of some kind of all-absorbing service requiring the concentration of mind, soul and body upon it. "Idle hands some

*mischief still will ever find to do,"* is never so applicable as in this case Evil thoughts, much more evil deeds, are impossible when we are thus preoccupied Strenuous labour in accordance with one's physical capacity is, therefore, absolutely necessary for those who will obey the law of self-restraint which is indispensable for individual as well as universal progress.

—*Young India*. Aug 3, 1928



THE greater the difficulties, the greater should be our faith  
—*Harijan* · April 6, 1940.



REASON is a poor thing in the midst of temptations. Faith alone can save us Reason appears to be on the side of those who indulge in drink and free love The fact is that reason is blurred on such occasions It follows the instinct Don't lawyers ranged on opposite sides make reason appear to be on their side? And yet one of them must be wrong, or it may be that both are Hence faith in the rightness of one's moral position is the only bulwark against the attack of reason



There is no such thing as absolute morality for all times. But there is a relative morality which is absolute enough for imperfect mortals that we are Thus, it is absolutely immoral to drink spirituous liquors except as medicine, in medicinal doses and under medical advice. Similarly, it is absolutely wrong to see lustfully any woman other than one's wife Both these position have been proved by cold reason Counter arguments have always been advanced They have been advanced against the very existence of God, the Sum of all that is Faith that transcends reason is our only Rock of Ages My faith has saved me and is still saving some from pitfalls It has never betrayed me It has never been known to betray anyone

—*Harijan* : Dec 23, 1939



I FANCY I see the distinction between you and me You as a Westerner, cannot subordinate reason to faith I, as an

Indian, cannot subordinate faith to reason even, if I will. You tempt the Lord God with your reason ; I won't As the *Gita* says, *God is the fifth, or the unknown, deciding factor.*

—*Harijan* · Oct 23, 1939.



I AM an irrepressible optimist, but I always base my optimism on solid facts — *Young India* : Oct. 23, 1924.



ASKED whether he was an optimist, and if so why he should despair of the future because Lord Birkenhead might not be always in office, he said, "I am an irrepressible optimist, because I believe in myself. That sounds very arrogant : doesn't it ? But I say it from the depth of my humility I believe in the supreme power of God. I believe in Truth and therefore I have no doubt in the future of this country or the future of humanity. Whatever Lord Birkenhead may say, I trust in God, Who knows how to confound the wisdom of men He is a consummate *Fadugar* and I have placed myself in His hands. But He is a hard taskmaster. He would accept nothing short of the best you are capable of. To me the change of Government does not mean anything I am an optimist because I expect many things from myself. I have not got them I know, as I am not yet a perfect being If I was one, I should not even need to reason with you When I am a perfect being I have simply to say the word, and the nation will listen I want to attain that perfection by service. — *Young India* : Aug 13, 1925.



I AM fully convinced that no body of men can make themselves into a nation or perform great tasks unless they become as true as steel and unless their promises come to be regarded by the world like the law of the Medes and Persians, inflexible and unbreakable

*From a speech, Mar. 27, 1918*



I BELIEVE in the necessity of the performance of "one's promises" at all costs — *Young India* . Mar. 27, 1927.

WE have in this country a habit of making promises in a fit of enthusiasm, keeping them for a time, and then forgetting them altogether.

—*Young India* July 7, 1927.



ABOVE all keep yourselves pure and clean, and learn to keep your promises even at the cost of life.

—*Young India* Nov 10, 1927



BREACH of promise is a base surrender of truth

—*Young India* May 1, 1930.



BREACH of a promise is no less an act of insolvency than a refusal to pay one's debt

—*Young India* Sept. 16, 1930



TO my knowledge, throughout my public and private career, I have never broken a promise

—*Harijan* April 22, 1939



A VOW is a purely religious act which cannot be taken in a fit of passion. It can be taken only with a mind purified and composed and with God as witness



ACTS which are not possible by ordinary self-denial become possible with the aid of vows which require extraordinary self-denial. It is hence believed that vows can only uplift us



IT is certainly better not to take a vow than having taken it to break it, one cannot be too cautious about taking vows. But we hold that the vast mass of mankind need the binding force of pledges. They build up a man's character. They are, on the one hand, a recognition of the fickleness of the human nature and, on the other, an additional help to strong minds.

Every one recognises the excellent effect produced by temperance pledges. With the support derived from such pledges, many have succumbed to the temptation to drink. A vow is fixed and unalterable determination to do a thing, when such a determination is related to something noble which can only uplift the man who makes the resolve. A vow is to all other indifferent resolves what a right angle is to all other angles. And just as a right angle gives an invisible and correct measure, so does a man of vows, rightly followed, give of himself an unvariable and correct measure. — *Young India* : June 28, 1919



ONLY he can take great resolves who has indomitable faith in God and has fear of God. — *Harijan* : July 17, 1938.



MY religion teaches me that a promise once made or a vow once taken for a worthy object may not be broken.

— *Young India* : Sept. 9, 1924.



IT is easy enough to take a vow under a stimulating influence. But it is difficult to keep to it especially in the midst of temptation.

— *Young India* : Jan. 22, 1925



MY own opinion and that of many others is that promises or vows are necessary for the strongest of us. A promise is like a right angle not nearly but exactly 90 degrees. The slightest deflection makes it useless for the grand purpose that the right angle serves. A voluntary promise is like a plumb line keeping a man straight and warning him when he is going wrong. Rules of general application do not serve the same purpose as an individual vow. We find therefore the system of declarations followed in all large and well-conducted institutions. The Viceroy has to take the oath of office. Members of legislatures have to do likewise all the world over, and in my opinion rightly so. A Soldier joining an army has to do likewise. Moreover, a written undertaking reminds one of what one has promised to do. Memory is a very frail thing. The written word stands for ever. — *Young India* . Oct 1, 1925.

A CORRESPONDENT who seems to be a regular and careful reader of *Navajivan* writes .—

"I spin regularly, but the question is whether or not I should bind myself to it by a vow. If I take a vow to spin regularly for one hour every day, I suppose I must do an hour's honest spinning unfailingly—come what may. Suppose now having taken the vow, I am required to go out on a long journey? how can I fulfil my vow about spinning or again, suppose I fall seriously ill, even then I must do my spinning or else be guilty of breaking my vow before man and God. On the other hand if I do not take a vow, what guarantee is there that my resolution would not give way and betray me at a critical moment? You will perhaps say that one's resolution ought to be made to sterner stuff. But when even the acknowledged leaders of the country are seen hourly breaking their resolutions, what can one expect from the rank and file? What are lesser mortals like myself to do? Would you kindly resolve my dilemma?"

Being accustomed from very childhood to taking vows I confess I have a strong bias in favour of the practice. It has come to my rescue in many a crisis. I have seen it save others from many a pitfall. A life without vows is like a ship without anchor or like an edifice that is built on slip sand instead of a solid rock. A vow imparts stability, ballast and firmness to one's character. What reliance can be placed on a person who lacks these essential qualities? An agreement is nothing but a mutual interchange of vows, simultaneously one enters into a pledge when one gives one's word to another.

In old days, the word of most of illustrious persons was regarded as good as a bond. They concluded transactions involving millions by oral agreements. In fact our entire social fabric rests on the sanctity of the pledged word. The world would go to pieces if there was not this element of stability, or finality in agreements arrived at. The Himalayas are immovably fixed for ever in their place. India would perish if the firmness of the Himalayas gave way. The sun, the moon and other heavenly bodies move with unerring regularity. Where

it is not so, human affairs would come to a standstill. But we know that the sun has been rising regularly at its fixed time for countless ages in the past and will continue to do so in future. The cooling orb of the moon will continue always to wax and wane and it has done for ages with a clock-work regularity. That is why we call the sun and the moon to be witness to our affairs. We base our calendar on their movements, we regulate our time by their rising and setting.

The same law, which regulates these heavenly bodies, applies equally to men. A person unbound by vows can never be absolutely relied upon. It is overweening pride to say, "This thing comes natural to me. Why should I bind myself permanently by vows? I can well take care of myself at the critical moment. Why should I take an absolute vow against wine? I never get drunk. Why should I forego the pleasure of an occasional cup for nothing?" A person who argues like this will never be weaned from his addiction.

To shirk taking of vows betrays indecision and want of resolution. One never can achieve anything lasting in this world by being irresolute. For instance, what faith can you place in a general or a soldier who lacks resolution and determination, who says, 'I shall keep guard as long as I can?' A householder, whose watchman says that he would keep watch as long as he can, can never sleep in security. No general ever won victory by following the principle of 'being vigilant so long as he could'.

I have before me innumerable examples of spinners at will. Every one of them has come to grief sooner or later. On the other hand, sacramental spinning has transformed the entire life of those who have taken to it, mountains of yarn stored up by them tell the tale. A vow is like a right angle. An insignificant right angle will make all the difference between ugliness and elegance, solidity and shakiness of a gigantic structure. Even so stability or instability, purity or otherwise of an entire career may depend upon the taking of a vow.

It goes without saying that moderation and sobriety are of the very essence of vow-taking. The taking of vows that are not feasible or that are beyond one's capacity would betray thoughtlessness and want of balance. Similarly a vow can be

made conditional without losing any of its efficacy or virtue. For instance there would be nothing wrong about taking a vow to spin for at least one hour every day and to turn out not less than 200 yards daily except when one is travelling or is sick. Such a vow would not only be quite in form but also easy of observance. The essence of a vow does not consist in the difficulty of its performance but in the determination behind it unflinchingly to stick to it in the teeth of difficulties.

—*Young India* August 22, 1929





PART V

**From Power to Service**



*Never will I seek nor receive private individual salvation. Never will I enter into final peace alone, but forever and everywhere will I live and strive for the redemption of every creature throughout the world.*

—KWAN-YIN (Chinese)



## PART V

# From Power To Service

IN the divine account books only our actions are noted, not what we have read or what we have spoken

— *Young India* · Jan 7, 1925.



EVERYONE has faith in God though everyone does not know it. For everyone has faith in himself and that multiplied to the 26th degree is God. The sum total of all that lives is God, we may not be God but we are of God even as a little drop of water is of the ocean. Imagine it torn away from the ocean and flung millions of miles away. It becomes helplessly torn from its surroundings and cannot feel the might and majesty of the ocean. But if someone could point to it that it is of the ocean, its faith would revive, it would dance with joy and the whole of the might and majesty of the ocean would be reflected in it

— *Harijan* June 3, 1939



GOD is a very hard taskmaster. He is never satisfied with fire-works' display. His mills although they grind surely and incessantly, grind excruciatingly slow, and He is never satisfied with hasty forfeitures of life. It is a sacrifice of the purest that He demands and so you and I have prayerfully to plod on, live out the life so long as it is vouchsafed to us to live it

— *Young India* Sept. 22, 1927



PRAYER is a result of realisation of our helplessness and our final reliance upon God to the exclusion of all else

— *Young India* : Nov 25, 1926



THERE is nothing that wastes the body like worry, and one who has any faith in God should be ashamed to worry about anything whatsoever. It is a difficult rule no doubt for the

simple reason, that faith in God with the majority of mankind is either an intellectual belief or a blind belief, a kind of superstitious fear of something indefinable. But to ensure absolute freedom from worry requires a living utter faith which is a plant of slow, almost unperceived, growth and requires to be constantly watered by tears that accompany genuine prayer. They are the tears of a lover who cannot brook a moment's separation from the loved one, or of the penitent who knows that it is some trace of impurity in him that keeps him away from the loved one

— *Harijan* Oct 17, 1937.



MANKIND is notoriously too dense to read the signs that God sends from time to time. We require drums to be beaten into our ears, before we would wake from our trance and hear the warning and see that to lose oneself in all is the only way to find oneself.

— *Young India* Aug 25, 1927



We are living in times when values are undergoing quick changes. We are not satisfied with slow results. We are not satisfied with the welfare merely of our own caste-fellows, not even of our own country. We feel or want to feel for the whole of humanity. All this is a tremendous gain in humanity's march towards its goal.

But we won't find the remedy for human ills by losing patience and by rejecting everything that is old because it is old. Our ancestors also dreamt, perhaps vaguely, the same dreams that fire us with zeal. The remedies they applied for similar ills, it is possible, are applicable even to the horizon that appears to have widened beyond expectations.

And my plea based on positive experience is that even as truth and *tahimsa* are not merely for the chosen few but for the whole of humanity to be practised in daily life, so exactly is self-control not merely for a few *Mahatmas* but for the whole of humanity. And even as because many people will be untruthful and violent, humanity may not lower its standard, so also though many, even the majority may not respond to the message of self-control, we may not lower our standard.

A wise judge will not give a wrong decision in the face of a hard case. He will allow himself to appear to have hardened his heart because he knows that truest mercy lies in not making bad law.

We may not attribute the weaknesses of the perishable body or the flesh to the imperishable soul that resides in it. We have to regulate the body in the light of the laws that govern the soul. In my humble opinion, these laws are few and unchangeable, capable of being understood and followed by the whole of the human family. There would be differences of degree but not of kind in their application. If we have faith, we won't lose it, because it may take a million years before humanity realizes or makes the nearest or visible approach to its goal. In Jawaharlal's language, let us have the correct ideology.

—*Harijan* May 30, 1936



WHEN both want to satisfy animal passion without having to suffer the consequences of their act it is not love, it is lust. But if love is pure, it will transcend animal passion and will regulate itself. We have not had enough education of the passions. When a husband says, "Let us not have children, but let us have relations," what is that but animal passion? If they do not want to have more children, they should simply refuse to unite. Love becomes lust the moment you make it a mean for the satisfaction of animal needs. It is just the same with food. If food is taken only for pleasure, it is lust. You do not take chocolates for the sake of satisfying your hunger. You take them for pleasure and then ask the doctor for an antidote. Perhaps you will tell the doctor that whisky befogs your brain and he gives you an antidote. Would it not be better not to take chocolates or whisky?

—*Harijan* June 27, 1937.



I HAVE come to the deliberate conclusion that so far, at least, as India is concerned, there is no case for the use of contraceptives. Those who advocate their use for Indian conditions either do not know them or choose to ignore them. But if it can be proved that the methods advocated are harmful

even in the West, it would be unnecessary to examine the special Indian conditions.

The methods must be proved to have failed if it can be shown that moral bonds have loosened, licentiousness has increased, and that instead of the check having been exercised by men and women for purposes of health and economic limitation of families only, it has been used principally for feeding animal passions. This is the moderate position. The extreme moral position condemns the use of contraceptives in every conceivable circumstance, it being contended that it is not necessary for man or woman to satisfy the sexual instinct except when the act is meant for race reproduction, even as it is not necessary for man and woman to eat except for sustaining the body. There is also the third position. There is a class of men who contend that there is no such thing as morality, or, that if there is, it consists not in exercising restraint but in indulgence of every form of animal appetite, so long as it does not so impair the constitution as to render it unfit for the very indulgence which is its object.

—*Harijan* · Dec. 21, 1937.



EVERY girl, every Indian girl, is not born to marry. I can show many girls who are to-day dedicating themselves to service, instead of serving one man. It is high time that the Hindu girls produce or reproduce an edition, and if possible, a glorified edition of Parvati and Sita.

—*Young India* : Nov 29, 1927.



ANY young man who makes dowry a condition of marriage discredits his education and his country and dishonours womanhood.

A strong public opinion should be created in condemnation of the degrading practice of dowry and young men who soil their fingers with such ill-gotten gold should be excommunicated from society. Parents of girls should cease to be dazzled by English degrees and should not hesitate to travel outside their little castes and provinces to secure true gallant young men for their daughters.

—*Young India* · June 21, 1928.

IF I had a girl under my charge I would rather keep her a maiden all her life than give her away to one who expected a single pice for taking her for his wife

— *Young India* Feb 14, 1929



THE system has to go Marriage must cease to be a matter of arrangement made by parents for money The system is intimately connected with caste So long as the choice is restricted to a few hundred young men or young women of a particular caste, the system will persist no matter what is said against it The girls or boys or their parents will have to break the bonds of caste if the evil is to be eradicated Then the age for marrying has also to be raised and the girls have to dare to remain spinsters, if need be, i.e., if they do not get a suitable match All this means education of a character that will revolutionize the mentality of the youth of the nation Unfortunately the system of education has no connection with our surroundings which therefore remain practically untouched by the education received by a microscopic minority of the boys and girls of the nation Whilst therefore whatever can be done to abate the evil must be done, it is clear to me that this evil and many others which can be named can only be tackled if there is education which responds to the rapidly changing conditions of the country How is it that so many boys and girls who have been passed through colleges are found unable or unwilling to resist the manifestly evil custom which affects their future so intimately as marriage does? Why should educated girls be found to commit suicide because they are not suited? Of what value is their education if it does not enable them to dare to defy a custom which is wholly indefensible and repugnant to one's moral sense? The answer is clear There is something radically wrong in the system of education that fails to arm girls and boys to fight against social or other evils That education alone is of value which draws out the faculties of a student so as to enable him or her to solve correctly the problems of life in every department.

*Harijan* May 23, 1936



CHASTITY is not a hot-house growth It cannot be superimposed It cannot be protected by the surrounding

wall of the *purdah*. It must grow from within, and, to be worth anything, it must be capable of withstanding every unsought temptation. It must be as defiant as Sita's. It must be a very poor thing that cannot stand the gaze of men. Men, to be men, must be able to trust their women-folk even as the latter are compelled to trust them. Let us not live with one limb completely or partially paralysed. Rama would be nowhere without Sita, free and independent even as he was himself. But for robust independence, Draupadi is perhaps a better example. Sita was gentleness incarnate. She was a delicate flower. Draupadi was a giant oak. She bent mighty Bhima himself to her imperious will. Bhima was terrible to every one, but he was a lamb before Draupadi. She stood in no need of protection from any one of the Pandavas. By seeking to-day to interfere with the free growth of the womanhood of India, we are interfering with the growth of free and independent-spirited men. What we are doing to our women and what we are doing to the untouchable recoil upon our heads with a force thousand times multiplied. It partly accounts for our weakness, indecision, narrowness and helplessness. Let us, then, tear down the *purdah* with one mighty effort.

—Young India · Feb 3, 1927



I DO believe that a real Hindu girl is a treasure. She is one of the gifts of Hinduism to humanity. Ramabai Ranade was such a gift. But existence of girl widows is a blot upon Hinduism for which the existence of a Ramabai is no atonement.

—Young India · Dec 4, 1928



WHILST there is, and very properly, glorification of real widowhood in Hinduism, there is, so far as I am aware, no warrant for the belief that in the Vedic times there was any absolute ban upon remarriage of widows. But my crusade is not against real widowhood. It is against its atrocious caricature. The better way is not to regard as widows at all the girls I have in view and whom every Hindu who has a spark of chivalry in him is bound to relieve from their intolerable yoke.

—Young India · Jan 9, 1930

I HAVE repeatedly said that every widow has as much right to remarry as every widower. Voluntary widowhood is a priceless boon in Hinduism, enforced widowhood is a curse

—*Harijan*. June 22, 1915



SATIHOOD is the acme of purity. This purity cannot be attained or realized by dying. It can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of the spirit from day to day

—*Young India* May 21, 1931



LET it be man's privilege to protect woman, but let no woman of India feel helpless in the absence of man or in the event of his failing to perform the sacred duty of protecting her

—*Young India* Dec. 15, 1921



OF all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of the better-half of humanity to me, the female sex, not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even to-day the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge.

—*Young India*. Sept 15, 1921.



PROSTITUTION, I know is a tremendous and a growing evil. The tendency to see virtue in vice and excuse evil in the sacred name of art or some other false sentiment has clothed this debasing indulgence with a kind of subtle respectability which is responsible for the moral leprosy which he who runs may see.

Great as the evil is in this age of unbelief or a mere mechanical belief in God and an age of multiplicity of comforts and luxuries almost reminding one of the degradation to which Rome had descended when she was apparently at the zenith of her power, it is not easy to prescribe a remedy. It cannot be remedied by law. London is seething with the vice. Paris is notorious for its vice which has almost become a fashion. If law would have prevented it, these highly-organised nations

would have cured their capitals of the vice. No amount of writing on the part of reformers like myself can deal with the evil in any appreciable form. The political domination of England is bad enough. The cultural is infinitely worse. For whilst we resent and therefore endeavour to resist the political domination we hug the cultural, not realising in our infatuation that when the cultural domination is complete, the political will defy resistance. Let me not be misunderstood. I do not wish to imply that before the British rule prcstitution was unknown in India. But I do say that it was not so rampant as now. It was confined to the few upper ten. Now it is fast undeing the youth of the middle classes. My hope lies in the youth of the country. Such of them, as are prey to the vice, are not vicious by nature. They are helplessly and thoughtlessly drawn to it. They must realise the harm that it has done them and society. They must understand too that nothing but a rigorously disciplined life will save them and the country from utter ruin. Above all unless they visualise God and seek His aid in keeping them from temptation, no amount of dry discipline will do them much good. Truly has the seer said in the *Gita* that *desire persists though man may by fasting keep his body under restraint. Desire goes only when one has seen God face to face*. Seeing God face to face is to feel that He is enthroned in our hearts even as a child feels a mother's affection without needing any demonstration. Does a child reason out the existence of a mother's love? Can he prove it to others? He triumphantly declares, 'It is.' So much it is with the existence of God. He defies reason. But He is experienced. Let us not reject the experience of Tulsidas, Chaitanya, Ramdas and a host of other spiritual teachers even as we do not reject that of mundane teachers.

— *Young India* · Dec. 12, 1927.



ALL of us men must hang our heads in shame, so long as there is a single woman whom we dedicate to our lust. I will far rather see the race of man extinct, than that we should become less than beasts by making the noblest of God's creation the object of our lust.

— *Young India* : July 21, 1921.



THERE can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth-control. But the only method handed down from ages past is self-control or *Brahmacharya*. It is an infallible sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it. And medical men will earn the gratitude of mankind, if instead of devising artificial means of birth-control they will find out the means of self-control. The union is meant not for pleasure but for bringing forth progeny. And union is a crime when the desire for progeny is absent.

Artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make man and woman reckless. And respectability that is being given to the methods must hasten the dissolution of the restraints that public opinion puts upon one. Adoption of artificial methods must result in imbecility and nervous prostration. The remedy will be found to be worse than the disease. It is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequences of one's acts. It is good for a person who over-eats to have an ache and fast. It is bad for him to indulge his appetite and then escape the consequences by taking tonics or other medicine. It is still worse for a person to indulge his animal passions and escape the consequences of his acts. Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws. Moral results can only be produced by moral restraints. All other restraints defeat the very purpose for which they are intended. The reasoning underlying the use of artificial methods is that indulgence is a necessity of life. Nothing can be more fallacious. Let those who are eager to see the births regulated explore the lawful means devised by the ancients, and try to find out how they can be revised. An enormous amount of spade-work lies in front of them. Early marriages are a fruitful source of adding to the population. The present mode of life has also a great deal to do with the evil of unchecked procreation. If those causes are investigated and dealt with, society will be morally elevated. If they are ignored by impatient zealots, and if artificial methods become the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result.

A society that has already become enervated through a variety of causes will become still further enervated by the

adoption of artificial methods Those men, therefore, who are light-heartedly advocating artificial methods, cannot do better than study the subject afresh stay their injurious activity and popularise *Brahmacharya* both for the married and the unmarried That is the only noble and straight method of birth-control. Self-control is the surest and the only method of regulating the birth-rate Birth-control by contraceptives is race suicide

— *Young India* . Dec 4, 1927



THAT birth requires to be regulated and controlled is common cause between me and the advocates of contraceptives and the like The difficulty of control through self-restraint is not to be denied Yet there is no other way of attaining the end if mankind is to fulfil its destiny. It is my innermost conviction that if the method under discussion gains universal acceptance, mankind will suffer moral deterioration This I say in spite of the evidence to the contrary that is often produced by the advocates of the method

I believe I have no superstition in me Truth is not truth merely because it is ancient. Nor is it necessarily to be regarded with suspicion because it is ancient There are some fundamentals of life which may not be lightly given up because they are difficult of enforcement in one's life

Birth control through self-control is no doubt difficult But no one has yet been known seriously to dispute its efficacy and even superiority over the use of contraceptives

— *Harijan* . Dec. 12, 1935



THE function of the organs of generation is merely to generate progeny obviously of the highest type possible for a married couple This can and should only take place when both parties desire, not sexual union but progeny which is the result of such union Desire for such union, therefore, without the desire for progeny, must be considered unlawful and should be restrained.

— *Harijan* . Mar. 14, 1935



BIRTH-control by contraceptives no doubt regulates to a certain extent the number of new-comers and enables persons

of moderate means to keep the wolf from the door. But the moral harm it does to the individual and society is incalculable. For one thing, the outlook upon life for those who satisfy the sexual appetite for the sake of it is wholly changed. Marriage ceases to be a sacrament for them. It means a revaluation of the social ideas hitherto prized as a precious treasure. No doubt this argument will make little appeal to those who regard the old ideals about marriage as a superstition. My argument is only addressed to those who regard marriage as a sacrament and woman not as an instrument of animal pleasure but as mother of man and trustee of the virtue of her progeny.

—*Harijan* Mar 31, 1936



IT is good to seek causes for things. But it is not always possible to discover them. The desire for children is universal. But I do not know any convincing cause, if to see oneself perpetuated through one's descendants is not a sufficient and convincing cause. My proposition however, is not vitiated if the cause I give for the desire is not found sufficiently convincing. The desire is there. It seems to be natural. I am not sorry for having been born. It cannot be unlawful for me to see the best in me reproduced. Anyway, till I see evil in procreation itself and till I see that the sexual act for mere pleasure is unjustifiable, I must hold that the sexual act is justified only where there is desire for children. I understand that this was so clear to the makers of the *Smritis* that Manu described only the born as children born of *dharma* and the rest of *kama*—lust. The more thought I give to the subject as dispassionately, as is possible, the more convinced I feel about the correctness of the position I have taken and am enforcing. It is becoming clearer to me that the difficulty lies in our ignorance of the subject with which needless secrecy is being associated. Our thought is clouded. We dread to face consequences. We resort to half measures as if they were perfect or final and thus render them most difficult of execution. If our thoughts were clear, if we became sure of our ground, our speech and action would be firm.

Thus, if I am sure that every morsel of food I take is for building and sustaining the body, I shall never desire to take

food for the pleasure of the palate I shall further realize that if I have any desire to eat things because they are tasty, and apart from hunger or the thought of sustaining the body, it is a token of disease and I should seek to cure myself of it and not satisfy it as if it was lawful or healthy Even so if I am quite clear that the sexual act, apart from the unquestioned desire for progeny, is unlawful and detrimental to the body mind and soul, surely, resistance to the desire will become easy—far easier than when I am not clear whether the gratification of more desire is or is not lawful and beneficial If I am quite clear about the unlawfulness of the desire, I shall treat it as if it were a disease and repel its attacks with all my vigour. I shall feel the stronger for resistance They are wrong, even untruthful, who claim that they do not like the act but are helpless and therefore resistance leaves them weak and defeated. If all such people were to examine themselves, they would discover that their thoughts deceive them Their thoughts cherish the desire, and their speech is false interpreter of their thoughts. If on the other hand the speech is a true interpreter of the thoughts, there can be no such thing as weakness. Defeat there may be Weakness never

—*Harijan* April 24, 1937.



THE disastrous consequences, it should never be forgotten, are a direct result of one single fundamental error, namely, that sexual indulgence for its own sake is a human necessity and that without it neither man nor woman reaches his or her full growth Immediately a person becomes possessed of such an idea and begins to look upon what in his estimation was one time a vice as a virtue, there is no end to the multiplication of devices that would excite animal passions and help him to indulge in them

—*Harijan* Dec 29, 1930



MORAL bankruptcy cannot be met or arrested by ordinary methods, most certainly not when immorality is claimed as a virtue and morality condemned as a weakness, superstition or even immorality For many advocates of contraceptives do indeed condemn continence as unnecessary and even harmful. In this state of things religious aid is the only effective check

upon licensed vice Religion here may not be taken in its narrow, parochial sense True religion is the greatest disturbing factor in life whether individual or collective A religious awakening constitutes a revolution, a transformation, a regeneration

—*Harijan* June 22, 1936



MY quarrel with the advocates of contraceptives lies in their taking it for granted that ordinary mortals cannot exercise self-control Some of them even go so far as to say that even if they can, they ought not to do so To them, no matter how eminent they may be in their own spheres, I say, in all humility but with utmost confidence, that they are talking without experience of the possibilities of self-control They have no right to limit the capacity of the human soul In the such instances the positive evidence of one person like me if it is reliable, is not only of greater value but decisive To dismiss my evidence as useless because I am popularly regarded as *Mahatma*, is not proper in a serious inquiry

—*Harijan* May 30, 1936



WHEREVER contraceptive practice have taken root they have let loose a host of evils which even he who runs can see But birth control enthusiasts fail to recognize this fact because they hold indulgence to be in itself good and have persuaded themselves that the spread of the birth control methods is morally desirable

—*Harijan* Dec 12, 1936



Bernard Shaw is reported to have said that coition accompanied by the use of contraceptives was nothing less than sexual masturbation A moment's reflection would show how accurate the description is

—*Harijan* Sept 12, 1936



Self-restraint is the very key-stone of the ethics of vow-taking For instance, one cannot take a vow of self-indulgence, to eat, drink and be marry, in short to do as one pleases This warning is necessary because I know of instances when an attempt was made to cover things of questionable import by means of vows In the heyday of non-co-operation one even heard of the objection raised "How can I resign from

Government service when I have made a covenant with it to serve it?" Or again, "How can I close my liquor shop since I have bound myself by contract to run it for five years?" Such questions might appear puzzling sometimes. But on closer thinking it will be seen that a vow can never be used to support or justify an immoral action. A vow must lead one upwards, never downwards towards perdition

The correspondent has concluded by having a fling at the 'acknowledged leaders' of the country and cited their so-called fickleness to justify his position. This sort of reasoning only betrays weakness. One should try to emulate and imitate only the virtues of one's leaders, never their faults. Our national leaders do not claim to be paragons of perfection. They occupy the position of eminence that they do in public life by virtue of certain qualities which they exhibit in their character. Let us ponder over those qualities and try to assimilate them, let us not even think of their shortcomings. No son can be called a worthy son of his father who only imbibes the shortcomings of his parents or pleads inability to keep clear of them. It is the virtues, not the faults, of one's parents that constitute one's true legacy. A son who only adds to the debts of his parents would be written down as unworthy. A worthy one would liquidate their debts and increase the legacy left by them.

— *Young India*. Aug 22, 1929



**Q** ALL agree that mechanical repetition of prayers is worse than useless. It acts as an opiate on the soul. I often wonder why you encourage repetition morning and evening of the eleven great vows as a matter of routine. May not this have a dulling effect on the moral consciousness of our boys? Is there no better way of inculcating these vows?

**A.** Repetitions, when they are not mechanical, produce marvellous results. Thus I do not regard the rosary as a superstition. It is an aid to the pacification of a wandering brain. Daily repetition of the vows falls under a different category. It is a daily reminder to the earnest seeker as he rises and retires that he is under the eleven vows which are to regulate his conduct. No doubt it will lose its effect if a person repeats

the vows mechanically under the delusion that the more repetition will bring him merit You may ask, "Why repeat the vows at all ? You know that you have taken them and are expected to observe them " There is force in the argument But experience has shown that a deliberate repetition gives stimulus to the resolution Vows are to the weak mind and soul what tonics are to a weak body Just as a healthy body needs no tonics, a strong mind may retain its health without the need of vows and the daily reminder thereof An examination of the vows will, however, show that most of us are weak enough to need their assistance —*Harijan* May 27, 1936



Q I AM a genuine seeker after *brahmacharya* But in spite of all my prayerful effort I am sinking deeper and deeper into self-indulgence I cannot blame my partner for it My circumstances do not permit me to enforce the rule about segregation

You advocate and believe in the efficacy of vows You have said in *Harijan* that "for the weak in mind and soul vows are like tonics " But how will you administer this tonic to a case like mine who has not the strength of will to carry out the vow he has taken ? Had I such a strong will, the necessity for taking vows would not have arisen

A. Let me bluntly tell you that I do not believe in your genuineness, not that you are wilfully lying You are unconsciously un-genuine If you are genuine, you will at least observe the rules of the game You give us your case when you say you cannot segregate yourself from your wife for want of room I have never heard such an excuse If you take the vow, you must at least produce the necessary atmosphere around you for its observance Every one who has successfully carried out the vow has invariably observed this first condition If you are living in only one room, you should go elsewhere or send away your wife or have a relative to sleep in the same room The question is how far you are determined It may be that you want to observe *brahmacharya* because you have read much about it and would like to be classed among *brahmacharis* I know many such young men If that is

your case, you should not make the attempt. One must have a burning desire to live that life. If you have it, you will adopt the measures that all aspirants have invariably adopted. You are then bound to succeed. —*Harijan* : June 29 1940.



Q Is not the realisation of one's error and the resolve never to repeat it a penance in itself? Is any further penance necessary?

A. Realisation of an error, which amounts to a fixed resolve never to repeat it, is enough penance. One casts away his evil habits as a snake casts off his skin, and thus purifies himself. Such self purification is itself complete penance. But he who gets into the habit of committing errors cannot easily shed it. For all such penance in its accepted sense, if undertaken with discrimination, is likely to be a great help.

—*Harijan* : Sept. 10, 1940



CONTROL over the organ of generation is impossible without proper control over all the senses. They are all interdependent

*Harijan* : June 13, 1936



HE is no warrior who fights outside foes of his imagination, and is powerless to lift his little finger against the innumerable foes within, or what is worse, mistakes them for friends.

—*Harijan* : April 4, 1936.



THE scaling of the Himalayas can, at best, give a temporary feeling of elation and triumph. But the reward of the conquest of self is a spiritual bliss that knows no waning, and grows ever more and more

—*Harijan* : Mar. 20, 1937.



IT is being said that restraint and abstinence are wrong, and free satisfaction of the sexual appetite and free love is the most natural thing. There was never a more ruinous superstition.

—*Harijan* : April 24, 1937

BOTH man and woman should know that abstention from satisfaction of the sexual appetite results, not in disease, but in health and vigour, provided that mind co-operates with the body

— *Young India* : Sept. 27, 1921.



MAN is nothing Napolean planned much and found himself a prisoner in St. Helena. The mighty Kaiser aimed at the crown of Europe and is reduced to the status of a private gentleman. God had so willed it. Let us contemplate such examples and be humble

— *Young India* . Oct. 9, 1924.



WE are but straws in the hands of God. He alone can blow us where He pleases. We cannot oppose His will.

— *Young India* : May 15, 1924.



GOD tries His votaries through and through, but never beyond endurance. He gives them strength enough to go through the ordeal. He prescribes for them

— *Young India* : Feb. 19, 1925.



GOD sometimes does try to the uttermost those whom He wishes to bless

— *Young India* : June 11, 1931.





PART VI

**From Service to Happiness**



*Renunciation of action and devotion through action are both means of final emancipation , but of these two devotion through action is better than renunciation.*

*—BHAGAVAD GITA*



## PART VI

# From Service to Happiness

A CORRESPONDENT, whom I know well, raises an issue, which I take for purely academic interest, because I know the views he has set forth are not his

"Is not our present-day morality unnatural? If it was natural, it should have been the same everywhere in all ages, but every race and community seems to have its own peculiar marriage laws, and in enforcing them men have made themselves worse than beasts. For diseases which are unknown amongst animals are quite common amongst men, infanticide, abortions, child-marriages, which are impossible in the brute creation, are the curse of the society that holds up marriage as a sacrament, and no end of evil results have sprung from what we uphold as laws of morality. And the miserable conditions of Hindu widows—what is it due to, but to the existing marriage laws? Why not go back to nature, and take a leaf out of the book of brute creation?"

I do not know whether the advocates of free love in the West resort to the argument summarised above or have any stronger reason to put forth, but I am sure that the tendency to regard the marriage bond as barbarous is distinctly Western. If the argument is also borrowed from the West, there is no difficulty about meeting it

It is a mistake to institute a comparison between man and the brute, and it is this comparison that vitiates the whole argument. For man is higher than the brute in his moral instincts and moral institutions. The law of nature as applied to the one is different from the law of nature as applied to the other. Man has reason, discrimination and free will such as it is. The brute has no such thing. It is not a free agent,

and knows no distinction between virtue and vice, good and evil. Man, being a free agent, knows these distinctions, and when he follows his higher nature, shows himself far superior to the brute, but when he follows his baser nature, can show himself lower than the brute. Even the races regarded as the most uncivilised on earth accept some restriction on sexual relations. If it be said the restriction is itself barbarous, then freedom from all restraints should be the law of man. If all men were to act according to this lawless law, there would be perfect chaos within twenty-four hours. Man being by nature more passionate than the brute, the moment all restraint was withdrawn, the lava of unbridled passion would overspread the whole earth and destroy mankind. Man is superior to the brute inasmuch as he is capable of self-restraint and sacrifice of which the brute is incapable.

Some of the diseases that are so common at the present day are the result of infringement of marriage laws. I should like to know a single instance of a man strictly observing the restraint of the marriage bond having suffered from the diseases the correspondent has in mind. Infanticide, child marriages and the like are also the result of the breach of marriage laws. For the law lays down that a man or woman shall choose a mate only when he or she has come of age, is healthy and capable of restraint and desires to have progeny. Those who strictly obey this law and regard the marriage bond as a sacrament, have never an occasion to be unhappy or miserable. Where marriage is a sacrament the union is not the union of bodies but the union of souls indissoluble even by the death of either party. Where there is a true union of souls, the re-marriage of a widow or widower is unthinkable, improper and wrong. Marriages, where the true law of marriage is ignored, do not deserve the name. If we have very few true marriages nowadays, it is not the institution of marriage that is to blame, but the prevailing form of it, which should be reformed.

The correspondent contends that marriage is no moral or religious bond but a custom, and a custom which is opposed to religion and morality, and hence deserves to be abolished. I submit that marriage is a fence that protects religion. If the fence were to be destroyed, religion would go to pieces. The

foundation of religion is restraint, and marriage is nothing but restraint. The man who knows no restraint has no hope of self-realisation I confess it may be difficult to prove the necessity of restraint to an atheist or a materialist But he, who knows the perishable nature of flesh from the imperishable nature of the spirit, instinctively knows that self-realisation is impossible without self-discipline and self-restraint The body may either be a playground of passion, or a temple of self-realisation. If it is the latter, there is no room there for libertinism The spirit needs must curb the flesh every moment

Woman will be the apple of discord where the marriage bond is loose, where there is no observance of the law of restraint If men were as unrestricted as the brutes they would straightaway take the road to destruction I am firmly of opinion that all the evils that the correspondent complains of can be eradicated not by abolishing marriage but by a systematic understanding and observance of the law of marriage

I agree that whereas amongst some communities marriage is permitted amongst very near relations, it is prohibited among other communities, that whereas some communities forbid polygamy some permit it Whilst one would wish that there was a uniform moral law accepted by all communities, the diversity does not point to the necessity of abolishing all restraint As we grow wise in experience, our morality will gain in uniformity Even to-day, the moral sense of the world holds up monogamy as the highest ideal, and no religion makes polygamy obligatory The ideal remains unaffected by the relaxation of practice according to time and place

I need not reiterate my views regarding remarriage of widows, as I consider remarriage of virgin widows not only desirable, but the bounden duty of all parents who happen to have such widowed daughters

—*Young India*. June 3, 1926



IT is only in India that from childhood we must hear of marriages Parents have no other thought, no other ambition save that of seeing their children well married and provided for. The one thing brings premature decay of mind and body and the other induces idleness and often makes of one

a parasite We exaggerate the difficulty of chastity and voluntary poverty and impute extraordinary merit to them, reserve them for *mahatmas* and *yogis* and rule the latter out of ordinary life, forgetting that real *mahatma* and *yoga* are unthinkable in a society where the ordinary level is brought down to the mud-bank On the principle that evil like the hare travels faster than good which like the tortoise though steady goes slow, voluptuousness of the West comes to us with lightning speed, and with all its variegated enchantment dazzles and blinds us to the realities of life We are almost ashamed of chastity, and are in danger of looking upn self-imposed poverty as a crime in the face of the Western splendour that descends upon us from minute to minute through the cable and day to day through the steamers that discharge their cargo on our shores But the West is not wholly what we see in India Even as the South African whites ill-judge us when they judge us through the Indian settlers, so shall we ill-judge the West through the human and the other Western cargo that delivers itself to us every day There is in the West a small but inexhaustible reservoir of purity and strength which those who have eyes of penetration may see beneath the deceptive surface Throughout the European desert there are cases from which those who will, may drink the purest water of life Chastity and voluntary poverty are adopted without brag, without bluster, and in all humility by hundreds of men and women, often for no other than the all-sufficing cause of service of some dear one or of the country We often prate about spirituality as if it had nothing to do with the ordinary affairs of life and had been reserved for anchorites lost in the Himalayan forests or concealed in some inaccessible Himalayan cave Spirituality that has no bearing on and produces no effect on everyday life is "an airy nothing "



I WOULD also ask you to disabuse yourselves of another superstition which is rampant nowadays It is being said that restraint and abstinence are wrong and free satisfaction of the sexual appetite and free love is the most natural thing There was never a more ruinous superstition You may be incapable of attaining the ideal, your flesh may be weak, but do

not therefore lower the ideal, do not make irreligion your religion. In your weak moments remember what I am telling you. The remembrance of this solemn occasion (marriage ceremony) may well steady and restrain you. The very purpose of marriage is restraint and sublimation of the sexual passion. If there is any other purpose, marriage is no consecration, but marriage for other purpose besides having progeny.

—*Harijan* April 24, 1937.



MARRIAGE loses its sanctity when its purpose and highest use is conceived to be the satisfaction of the animal passion without contemplating the natural result of such satisfaction.

—*Harijan* March 28, 1936



LOVE based upon indulgence of animal passion is at best a selfish affair and likely to snap under the slightest strain. And why should the sexual act be a sacrament in the human species, if it is not that among the lower animals? Why should we not look at it as what it is in reality, i.e., a simple act of procreation to which we are helplessly drawn for the perpetuation of the species? Only a man having been gifted with a free will to a limited extent, exercises the human prerogative of self-denial for the sake of the nobler purpose to which he is born than his brother animals. It is the force of habit which makes us think the sexual act to be necessary and desirable for the promotion of love, apart from procreation, in spite of innumerable experiences to the contrary that it does not deepen love, that it is in no way necessary for its retention or enrichment. Indeed instances can be quoted in which that bond has grown stronger with abstinence. No doubt abstinence must be a voluntary act undertaken for mutual moral advancement.

Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality. If so, it must be based on ever-increasing restraint upon the demands of the flesh. Thus marriage must be considered to be a sacrament imposing discipline upon the partners, restricting them to the physical union only among themselves and for the purpose only of procreation when both the partners desire and are prepared for it.

EVERY husband and wife can make a fixed resolution from to-day never to share the same room or the same bed at night and to avoid sexual contact, except for the one supreme purpose for which it is intended for both man and beast. The beast observes the law invariably. Man having got the choice has grievously erred in making the wrong choice. Every woman can decline to have anything to do with contraception. Both man and woman should know that abstention from satisfaction of the sexual appetite results not in disease but in health and vigour, provided that mind co-operates with the body.



THE peace of the household is a most desirable thing. But it cannot be an end in itself. For me, the married state is as much a state of discipline as any other. Life is duty, a probation. Married life is intended to promote mutual good both here and hereafter. It is meant also to serve humanity. When one partner breaks the law of discipline, the right accrues to the other of breaking the bond. The breach here is moral and not physical. It precludes divorce. The wife or the husband separates but to serve the end for which they had united. Hinduism regards each as absolute equal of the other. No doubt a different practice has grown up, no one knows since when. But so have many other evils crept into it. This however I do not know that Hinduism leaves the individual absolutely free to do what he or she likes for the sake of self-realisation for which and which alone he or she is born.

— *Young India* Oct 21, 1926



HINDU culture has erred on the side of excessive subordination of the wife to the husband, and has insisted on the complete merging of the wife in the husband. This has resulted in the husband sometimes usurping and exercising authority that reduces him to the level of the brute.

*Young India* : Oct 3, 1929.



MY ideal of a wife is Sita, and of husband Ram. But Sita was no slave of Ram. Or, each was slave of the other ..... The wife has a perfect right to take her own course, and

meekly have consequences when she knows herself in the right and when her resistance is for a noble purpose

— *Young India* Oct. 21, 1926



THE use of contraceptives in India is, in my opinion, unwarranted by any single condition that can be named. Do middle class parents suffer from too many children? Individual instances will not suffice to make out a case for excessive birth-rate among the middle classes. The cases in India, where I have observed the advocacy of these methods, are those of widows and young wives. Thus in the one case it is illegitimate birth that is to be avoided, not the secret intercourse. In the other it is again pregnancy that is to be feared, and not the rape

— *Young India* Sept 16, 1926



QUITE a striking contrast to the old peasant who had brought his all in the service of the poor was Mrs How-Martyn, the birth-control enthusiast from England, who had brought her gospel for the relief of the poor in India and who came to convert Gandhiji or be converted. Of course, she has come to India for the first time and has hardly seen anything of the poor. So she talked of her experience of the British slums and put in a strong plea for the "poor woman" who had to submit to the strong man.

On her very first premise Gandhiji joined issue "There is no poor woman. Poor woman is mightier than man, and I am quite prepared to demonstrate it to you if you come to the villages of India. Any woman there would tell you that, if she did not want it, there was no man born of woman who could compel her. I can say this from my own experience in relation to my wife, and mine is no solitary instance. If the will to die rather than to yield, is there, no monster can make the woman yield. No, it is a mutual affair. Men and women both are a mixture of the brute and the divine, and if we can subdue the brute, it is well and good."

"But what is the woman to do, if the man for the sake of having not more children goes to another woman?"

"So now you are shifting your own ground. If you mis-

conceive your premises, you are bound to come to wrong conclusions. Don't assume things and try to unman man and unwoman woman. Let me understand the basis of your gospel. When I said your birth-control propaganda was sufficient introduction, there was some seriousness behind the joke, for I know that there are some men and women who think that in birth-control lies our salvation. Let me, therefore, understand the basis from you."

"I do not see in it the salvation of world," said Mrs. How-Martyn, "but what I say is that without some form of birth-control there is no salvation. You would do it in one way, I would do it in another. I advocate your method as well, but not in all cases. You seem to regard a beautiful function as something objectionable. Two animals are nearest of the divine when they are going to create new life. There is something very beautiful in the act."

"Here again you are labouring under a confusion," said Gandhiji. "The creation of a new life is nearest the divine, I agree. All I want is that one should approach that act in a divine way. That is to say, man and woman must come together with no other desire than that of creating a new life. But if they come together merely to have a fond embrace, they are nearest the devil. Man unfortunately forgets that he is nearest the divine, hankers after the brute instinct in himself and become less than the brute."

"But why must you cast aspersion on the brute?"

"I do not. The brute fulfils the law of his own nature. The lion in his majesty is a noble creature and he has a perfect right to eat me up, but I have none to develop paws and pounce upon you. Then I lower myself and become worse than the brute."

"I am sorry," said Mrs. How-Martyn, "I have expressed myself very badly. I confess that in a majority of cases it is not going to be their salvation, but a factor which will conduce to higher life. You understand what I mean, though I am afraid I have not been able to make myself quite clear."

"Oh, no. I do not want to take any undue advantage of you. But I want you to understand my view-point. Do not

run away with misconceptions Man must choose either of the two courses, the upward or the downward, but as he has the brute in him, he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially when the downward is presented to him in a beautiful garb Man easily capitulates when sin is presented in the garb of virtue, and that is what Marie Stopes and others are doing If I were to popularize the religion of indulgence, I know that men would simply clutch at it. I know that, if people like you in selfless zeal cried themselves hoarse unholding your doctrine, you might even ride to apparent victory, but I also know that you will ride to certain death, of course, totally unconscious of the mischief you are doing The downward instinct requires no advocacy, no argument It is there embodied in them, and unless you regulate and control it, there is danger of disease and pestilence "

Mrs How-Martyn, who until now seemed to accept the distinction between the divine and the devilish, contended that there was really none and that they were much more allied than people imagined. That really is the thing at the back of all birth-control philosophy, and the enthusiasts forget that that is their Achilles' heel

"So you think the devil and the divine are the same? Do you believe in the sun? And if you do, don't you think you must believe in the shadow?" asked Gandhiji

"Why should you call 'shadow' devil?"

"You may call it 'no-God' if you like"

"I do not think there is 'no-God' in the shadow There is life everywhere"

"There is a thing like absence of life Do you know that Hindus will reduce the body of the dearest one to ashes as soon as life in it is extinct? There is an essential unity in all life, but there is diversity too, and one has to penetrate it and find the unity behind—but not by intellect, as you are trying to do Where there is truth, there must be untruth, where there is light, there must be shadow You cannot realize the wider consciousness, unless you subordinate completely reason and intellect, and the body, too"

Mrs How-Martyn looked puzzled, and time was fast

running against her. But Gandhiji said : "No, I am prepared to give you more time. But for that you must come to Wardha and stay with me. I am as great an enthusiast as you, and you must not leave India until you have converted me or converted yourself."

As I listened to the rapturous discourse, which other engagements had to bring to an end, I was reminded of the great words of St. Francis of Assisi : "Light looked down and beheld darkness 'Thither will I go,' said Light : Peace looked down and beheld War , 'Thither will I go,' said Peace : Love looked down and beheld Hatred , 'Thither will I go,' said Love —and the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us "

—*Harijan* : Feb. 1, 1937.



PERSONS who use contraceptives will never learn the virtue of self-restraint. They will not need it. Self-indulgence with contraceptives may prevent the coming of children but will sap the vitality of both men and women—perhaps more of men than of women. It is unmanly to refuse battle with the devil.

—*Harijan* : April 17, 1937



'I SHALL now change the subject,' said the *Swami*. You would prefer self-control to birth control ?'

'I think artificial birth-control or birth-control according to methods suggested to-day and recommended in the West is suicidal. When I say 'suicidal,' I do not mean resulting in the extinction of the race I mean suicidal in a higher sense of the term, that is to say these methods make man lower than the brute , they are immoral.'

'But how long are we to tolerate indiscriminate procreation ? I know a man who used to purchase a seer of milk, and went on diluting it with water in order to divide it between his children whose number increased every year. Don't you think this was a sin ?'

'It is a sin to bring forth unwanted children, but I think it is a greater sin to avoid the consequences of one's own action. It simply unmans man.'

'What then is the most practical method of telling man this truth ?'

'The most practical method is to live the life of self-control Example is better than precept'

'But the West asks us, "Why is it that you have greater child mortality and lower life-average than we, though you regard yourselves as more spiritual than the West ?" Do you believe in many children, Mahatmaji ?'

'I believe in no children'

'Then the whole race will be extinct'

'It won't be extinct, it will be transformed into something better But it can never happen, for we have inherited from eternity the sex-instinct from our progenitors It means a tremendous effort to check this habit of ages, and yet it is a simple effort Absolute renunciation, absolute *brahmacharya* is the ideal state If you dare not think of it marry by all means, but even then live a life of self-control'

'Have you any working method to teach this to the masses ?'

'It is, as I said a moment ago, to attain complete self-control and go and live that life amongst the masses A life of self-restraint and denial of all luxuries cannot but have its effect on the masses There is an indissoluble connection between self-control and the control of the palate The man who observes *brahmacharya* will be controlled in every one of his acts and will be humble'

'I see what you mean,' said the *Swami* 'The masses do not know the happiness of self-control and we have to teach them that But what about the argument of the West I referred to before ?'

'I do not think that we are more spiritually-minded than the West If we were, we should not have fallen so low But because the average life of a Westerner is much higher than ours, it does not prove the spirituality of the West Whoever is spiritually-minded must show a better, not necessarily a longer life'

—*Harijan* Sep 7, 1935

IT is the philanthropic motive that no doubt impels many birth-control reformers to a whirlwind campaign in favour of the use of contraceptives. I invite them to contemplate the ruinous consequences of their misplaced philanthropy. Those whom they want to reach will never use them in any appreciable numbers. Those who ought not to use them will, without doubt, use them to the undoing of themselves and their partners. This would not matter in the least, if the use of contraceptives was incontestably proved to be right physically and morally.

—*Harijan* May 9, 1936.



THE use of contraceptives is infinitely more tempting than the whisky bottle. But it is no more lawful than the sparkling liquid for its fatal temptation. Nor can opposition to the use of either be given up in despair because their use seems to be growing. If the opponents have faith in their mission, it has to be pursued. A voice in the wilderness has a potency which voices uttered in the midst of 'the madding crowd' lack. For the voice in the wilderness has meditation, deliberation and unquenchable faith behind it, whilst the babel of voices has generally nothing but the backing of the experience of personal enjoyment or the false and sentimental pity for the unwanted children and their suffering mothers. Argument of personal experience has as much weight as an act of a drunkard. The argument of pity is a trap into which it is dangerous to fall. Sufferings of unwanted children and of equally unwanted motherhood are punishments or warnings devised by beneficent nature. Disregard of the law of discipline and restraint is suicide. Ours is a state of probation. If we refuse to bear the yoke of discipline, we court failure like cowards, we avoid battle and give up the only joy of living.

—*Harijan* : March 27, 1937.



I HOLD myself to be incapable of writing anything derogatory to womanhood. My regard for the fair sex is too great to permit me to think ill of them. She is, what she has been described to be in English, the better half of mankind.

—*Harijan* . Feb 4, 1939.

TO call a woman a member of, 'the weaker sex' is a libel. In what way is woman the weaker sex I do not know. If the implication is that she lacks the brute instinct of man or does not possess it in the same measure as man, the charge may be admitted. But then woman as becomes, she is, the nobler sex. If she is weak in striking, she is strong in suffering. I have described woman as the embodiment of sacrifice and *ahimsa*. She has to learn not to rely on man to protect her virtue or her honour. I do not know a single instance of a man having ever protected the virtue of a woman. He cannot even if he would. Rama certainly did not protect the virtue of Sita, nor the five Pandavas of Draupadi. Both these noble women protected their own virtue by the sheer force of their purity. No person loses honour or self-respect but by his consent. A woman no more loses her honour or virtue because a brute renders her senseless and ravishes her than a man loses his because a wicked woman administers to him a stupefying drug and makes him do what she likes. —*Harijan* : Nov 14, 1936.



MAN has regarded woman as his tool. She has learned to be his tool, and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such because when one drags another in his fall the descent is easy. —*Harijan* Jan 25, 1939



WOULD that woman realize the power she has latent in her for good, if she has also for mischief. It is in her power to make the world more livable both for her and her partner whether as father, son or husband, if she would cease to think of herself as weak and fit only to serve as doll for man to play with. If society is not to be destroyed by insane wars of nations against nations and still more insane wars on its moral foundations, the woman will have to play her part not manfully, as some are trying to do, but womanfully. She won't better humanity by vying with man in his ability to destroy life mostly without purpose. Let it be her privilege to wean the erring man from his error which will envelop in his ruin that of woman also. —*Harijan* Nov. 16, 1936



WOMAN is the companion of man, gifted with equal

mental capacities. She has the right to participate in very minutest detail in the activities of man, and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him.

—From a speech · Feb 20, 1918.

WOMAN, I hold, is the personification of self sacrifice, but unfortunately to-day she does not realize what a tremendous advantage she has over man —*India's Case for Swaraj*, p 401

MY wife I made the orbit of all woman In her I studied all women I came in contact with many European women in South Africa and I knew practically every Indian woman there I worked with hem I tried to show them they were not slaves either of their husbands or parents, not only in the political field but in the domestic as well But the trouble was that some could not resist their husbands The remedy is in the hands of women themselves The struggle is difficult for them, and I do not blame them I blame the men Men have legislated against them. Man has regarded woman as his tool She has learned to be his tool and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another in his fall the descent is easy I have felt that during the years still left to me if I can drive home to women's minds the truth that they are free, we will have no birth-control problem in India If they will only learn to say 'no' to their husbands when they approach them carnally, I do not suppose all husbands are brutes, and if woman only know how to resist them, all will be well I have been able to teach women who have come in contact with me how to resist their husbands The real problem is that many do not want to resist them No resistance bordering upon bitterness will be necessary in 99 out of 100 cases If a wife says to her husband, 'No, I do not want it,' he will make no trouble But she hasn't been taught Her parents in most cases won't teach it to her There are some cases, I know, in which parents have appealed to their daughters' husbands not to force motherhood on their daughters And I have come across amenable husbands too I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance. She thinks now that she has not got it

—*Young India* . June 14, 1927.

I KNOW from my own experience that as long as I looked upon my wife carnally, we had no real understanding. Our love did not reach a high plane. There was affection between us always, but we came closer and closer the more we or rather I became restrained. There never was want of restraint on the part of my wife. Very often she would show restraint, but she rarely resisted me although she showed disinclination very often. All the time I wanted carnal pleasure I could not serve her. The moment I bade good-bye to a life of carnal pleasure our whole relationship became spiritual. Lust died and love reigned instead.

— *Young India* Jan 2, 1931



I AM uncompromising in the matter of woman's rights. In my opinion, she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality.

— *Young India* Oct. 17, 1929.



I WILL far rather see the race of man extinct than that we should become less than beasts by making the noblest of God's creation the object of our lust.

— *Young India* July 21, 1921.



THE real ornament of woman is her character, her purity. Metal and stones can never be real ornaments. The names of women like Sita and Damayanti have become sacred to us for their unsullied virtue, never for their jewellery, if they wore any.

— *Young India* June 19, 1934



IN this country of semi-starvation and insufficient nutrition of practically eight per cent of the people, the wearing of jewellery is an offence to the eye.

— *Harijan* Dec. 22, 1933

IF you want to play your part in the world's affairs you must refuse to deck yourselves for pleasing man. If I was born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything.

— *Young India* Oct 20, 1927



I DO not believe that woman is prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man. It is easier for her than for man to exercise self-restraint I hold that the right education in this country is to teach woman the art of saying 'no' even to her husband, to teach her that it is no part of her duty to become a mere tool or a doll in her husband's hands. She has rights as well as duties Those who see in Sita a willing slave under Rama do not realize the loftiness of either her independence or Rama's consideration for her in everything. Sita was no helpless weak woman incapable of protecting herself or her honour. To ask India's woman to take to contraceptives is, to say the least, putting the cart before the horse. The first thing is to free her from mental slavery, to teach her the sacredness of her body, and to teach her the dignity of national service and the service of humanity It is not fair to assume that India's women are beyond redemption, and that they have therefore to be simply taught the use of contraceptives for the sake of preventing births and preserving such health as they may be in possession of

Let not the sisters who are rightly indignant over the miseries of women who are called upon to bear children whether they will or no, be impatient Not even the propaganda in favour of contraceptives is going to promote the desired end overnight Every method is a matter of education My plea is for the right type

—*Harijan* : May 2, 1936



WOMAN is the incarnation of *ahimsa* *Ahimsa* means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure ? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour ? But she forgets them in the joy of creation Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day ? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar She can

become the leader in *Satyagraha* which does not require the learning that books give but does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith.

My good nurse in the Sassoon Hospital, Poona, as I was lying on a sick bed years go, told me the story of a woman, who refused to take chloroform because she would not risk the life of the babe she was carrying. She had to undergo a painful operation. The only anæsthetic she had was her love for the babe, to save whom no suffering was too great. Let not women who can count many such heroines among them, ever despise their sex or deplore that they were not born men. The contemplation of that heroine often makes me envy woman the status that is hers, if she only knew. There is as much reason for man to wish that he was born a woman as for woman to do otherwise. But the wish is fruitless. Let us be happy in the state to which we are born and do the duty for which nature has destined us.

—*Harijan* Feb 24, 1940



EQUALLY important is the question of the status of women both Hindu and Mohammadan. Are they or are they not to play their full part in the plan of regeneration alongside of their husbands? They must be enfranchised. They can no longer be treated either as dolls or slaves without the social body remaining in a condition of social paralysis. And here again I would venture to suggest to the reformer that the way to women's freedom is not through education but through the change of attitude on the part of men and corresponding action. Education is necessary but it must follow the freedom. We dare not wait for literary education to restore our womanhood to its proper state. Even without literary education our women are as cultured as any on the face of the earth. The remedy largely lies in the hand of husband.

—*From a speech* July 17, 1917.



I AM told that our literature is full of even an exaggerated apotheosis of women. Let me say that it is an altogether wrong apotheosis. Let me place one simple test before you. In what light do you think of them when you proceed to write about

them ? I suggest that before you put your pens to paper, think of woman as your own mother, and I assure you the chastest literature will flow from your pens even like the beautiful rain from heaven which waters the thirsty earth below. Remember that a woman was your mother before a woman became your wife. Far from quenching their spiritual thirst some writers stimulate their passions, so much so that poor ignorant women waste their time wondering how they might answer to the description our fiction gives of them. Are detailed descriptions of their physical form an essential part of literature, I wonder ! Do you find anything of the kind in the *Upanishads*, the *Quran* or the *Bible* ? And yet do you know that the English language would be empty without the *Bible* ? Three parts *Bible* and one part Shakespeare is the description of it. Arabic would be forgotten without the *Quran*. And think of Hindi without Tulsidas. Do you find in it anythink like what you find in present-day literature about women ?

— *Harijan* : Nov. 21, 1936.



IF you want to establish *Swaraj* in India, which for you and me can only mean *Rama Rajya*, you must become pure in mind and body like Sita for then alone you will become the mothers of heroes. And as a first step towards attaining bodily purity you must wear pure, homespun *khadi* just as Sita did in days of old. And lastly you must emancipate yourselves and your daughters from the thralldom of the various social abuses and tyrannies that are prevalent in your midst at present.

— *Young India* : Feb 21, 1929.



CHAPTER VII  
GANDHIJI'S  
**Golden Laws of Good Life**



*“An ounce of practice is worth a ton of precept.”*

*—PROVERB*



## CHAPTER VII

# Gandhiji's Golden Laws of Good Life

### 1 NO PERSONAL GRIEVANCES

On at least one occasion, when walking on the footpath outside President Kruger's unpretentious house in Pretoria, Gandhi was violently pushed and kicked into the road by a watchman. Though he could have produced a friendly European witness who had intervened to prevent further assault, he refused to take action against the offender.

"What does the poor man know?" he asked his friend. "All coloured people are the same to him. He no doubt treats negroes just as he has treated me. I have made it a rule not to go to court in respect of any personal grievance. So I do not intend to proceed against him." He maintained this rule throughout his stay in the country. —*H S L Polak*

### 2 CLEANLINESS

In the course of his activities Gandhi visited the untouchables' quarters, which, he found, to his surprise, were well-kept and clean. By contrast, the surroundings of the Vaishnava temple were filthy. Gandhi was horrified, for he was aware that the Hindu scriptures had "laid the greatest emphasis on cleanliness, both inward and outward."

—*H S L Polak*

### 3 SEVEN RULES OF GOOD LIFE

Gandhiji summed up the following seven rules of good life in a speech at Madras (*Speeches and Writings* pp. 316-330) —

"The first rule is a vow to speak the truth in all circumstances.

"The second rule in Gandhi's way was the practice of *Ahimsa*.

"The third vow was one of celibacy. Those who want to perform national service, or those who want to have a glimpse

of the real religious life, must lead a celibate life, no matter if married or unmarried'... ...

"The fourth vow was 'to control the palate' Continually Gandhiji inveighed against elaborate cooking, and especially against the use of stimulating condiments. We should eat only what is 'necessary for the proper maintenance of our physical health' The law of *ahimsa*, of course, prescribes a strictly vegetation diet. Tea, coffee and tobacco are condemned as well as alcohol. ... .

"The fifth rule was the 'vow of non-thieving' This sounds delusively simple, until one realizes that it involves a revolutionary attitude to property. Gandhiji came near to saying, with Prondhon, that 'property is theft' If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it, I thief from somebody else'... .

"The sixth vow of 'non-attachment' (a better translation than 'non-possession') enjoined the extinction of desire for the things of this life

"The seventh is a vow of poverty. We should keep only what is strictly necessary for our bodily wants and think constantly of simplifying life" —H N Brailsford

#### 4 KEY TO VIGOUR

He believed that continence is the key to mental and physical vigour. He said plainly that a virtuous man should not desire progeny "A man whose activities are wholly consecrated to the realization of Truth, which requires utter selflessness, can have no time for the selfish purpose of begetting children and running a household" It is clear that, throughout the latter half of his long life, Gandhiji had succeeded in extirpating sex in himself "for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake" Once during an illness, as he confessed in *Harjan* (26 December 1936), "whilst he was asleep, he suddenly felt as though he wanted to see a woman" The interesting part of this account of "this frightful experience.. the blackest moment of my life" is his statement that this was the first time that anything of the kind happened to him in nearly forty years—that is to say, from the age of twenty-seven onwards"

—H N Brailsford

## 5 NO SIN LIKE COWARDICE

"Our women were easily scared away. It was so more or less all over the world. He wanted our women to learn to be brave. His advice to them to commit suicide rather than allow themselves to be dishonoured has been much misunderstood. They could keep a dagger for self-defence if they wished to. But a dagger was no use against overwhelming odds. He had advised them to take poison and end their lives rather than submit to dishonour. Their very preparedness should make them brave. No one could dishonour a woman who was fearless of death. They had two ways of self-defence—to kill and be killed or to die without killing. He would teach them the latter, not the former. Above all, he wanted them to be fearless. There was no sin like cowardice."

—*Harijan* (November 3, 1946)

## 6 WEAR A SMILE

In an elevator in America was this sign "No one is fully clothed unless he wears a smile." Mahatma Gandhi was fully clothed, for he always wore a smile which drew attention to his face rather than his bare body

—*E. Stanley Jones*

## 7 BECOME SCAVENGERS

When a delegation of Indians, headed by an American Missionary, representing a Graduates Association, called on Mahatma Gandhi and asked him what they could do to help the city, he answered in two words "Become scavengers." He meant they should help clean up the city physically, mentally and morally

—*E. Stanley Jones*

## 8 UNTO THIS LAST

"This is how I understand Ruskin's teaching —

I "The good of the individual is contained in the good of all

II "A lawyer's labour has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right to earn their livelihood from labour

III "A life of labour, i.e. of the tiller of the soil and hardcraftsman, is the life worth living

"The first I know The second I had dimly realized  
 The third had never occurred to me Ruskin made it as clear  
 as possible for me that the second and the third were con-  
 tained in the first I awoke with the dawn, ready to reduce  
 these principles to practice." —*My Experiments with Truth.*

## 9 PREACH WHAT YOU PRACTICE

He refused to preach anything he had not tried When I urged him to go to Europe before the war, hoping that his very presence there would be a call to peace instead of war, his reply was simple. "I have not demonstrated peace in my country, how can I preach it to Europe?" Somebody has said that "All great literature is autobiography" Then all great preaching is the sharing of an operative act Gandhi's words had weight, for they had the content of experimentation in them

—*E. Stanley Jones*

## 10 GOOD BOOKS

When a missionary, Dr. S W. Clemes, asked Mahatma years ago what book or person has influenced him the most, he replied, "The *Bible*, Ruskin and Tolstoi" In later years he would have undoubtedly added the "Gita"

—*E. Stanley Jones*

## 11. GOOD FOR EVIL

The idea of *Satyagraha* influenced Gandhiji through a Gujarati Hymn He says of it "Its precepts—return good for evil—became my guiding principle It became such a passion with me that I began numerous experiment in it"

The hymn :

"For a bowl of water give a goodly meal ,  
 For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal ,  
 For a simple penny pay thou back with gold ,  
 If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold  
 Thus the words and actions of the wise regard  
 Every little service ten-fold they reward  
 But the truly noble know all men as one ,  
 And return with g'adness good for evil done "

## 12 T N T.

Clemencean, the Tiger, once said · "When the Christian decides to be a Christian, then the new revolution begins" In the hands of Gandhiji The new Testament is T N T In our hands it very often becomes a soporific The little girl was nearer meaning when she said "Barbara, I tell you the New Testament does not end with Timothy, it ends with Revolutions" But with us it often ends where one describes a certain conference as ending "It was a very revolutionary conference" Gandhiji turned our resolutions into revolutions—by the simple method of applying them

—E Stanley Jones.

## 13 TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

It reminds one of the question put to Lincoln during the Civil War "I hope God is on our side?" and the reply . "My concern is whether we are on God's side" Gandhiji had one problem in life In this matter am I on the side of Truth? When he decided to adopt two things Truth and Non-violence—One the Fact and the other the Method of applying the Fact—he went forth believing that he had cosmic backing for what he was doing It gave him an inner steadiness of purpose and a terrific drive—quiet but terrific For Gandhi felt himself the agent of Cosmic Forces working through him

"I will not sacrifice Truth and Ahimsa," he said, "even for the deliverance of my country and my religion "

## 14 A DAY OFF

Dr John R Mott once said to Gandhiji. "The greatest thing you have ever done is the observance of your day of silence "

But Gandhiji said to Louis Fischer "I used to travel morning, noon and night in hot trains, and on open bullock carts throughout hot India and thousands of people would come to ask me questions, make pleas and beg that I pray with them and I used to get tired, so I introduced this weekly day of silence Since then I have clothed this weekly day of silence in all kinds of moral virtues and given it philosophic content, but actually it was because I wanted a day off "

## 15 EFFICACY OF PRAYER

I came across a beautiful thing from Tennyson which I present to the readers of *Young India* if perchance I convert them to a definite belief in the efficacy of prayer. Here is the gem :

“More things are wrought by prayers  
 Than this world dreams of, wherefore let thy voice  
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
 For what are men better than sheep or goats,  
 That novrish a blind life within the brain,  
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?”  
 For so the whole round earth is every way  
 Bound by golden chains about the feet of God ?

— *Young India* . Mar. 31, 1920.

## 16 CONFESSION OF ERROR

The only virtue I want to claim is truth and non-violence. I lay no claim to superhuman powers. I want none I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow beings wears, and am therefore as liable to err as any. My services have many limitations, but God has up to now blessed them in spite of the imperfections. For, confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before. I feel stronger for my confession. And the cause must prosper for the retracing. Never has man reached his destination by persistence in deviation from the straight path.

— *Young India* : February 16, 1922.

## 17. RULES OF FASTING

From a layman’s and from a purely physical standpoint I should lay down the following rules for all those who may wish to fast on any account whatsoever :

I Conserve your energy both physical and mental from the very beginning

II You must cease to think of food whilst you are fasting.

III Drink as much cold water as you can, with or without soda and salt, but in small quantities at a time (water

should be boiled, strained and cooled). Do not be afraid of salt and soda, because most waters contain both these salts in a free state.

IV. Have a warm sponge daily

V. Take an enema regularly during fast You will be surprised at the impurities you will expel daily

VI Sleep as much as possible in the open air

VII Bathe in the morning sun A sun and air bath is at least as great a purifier as a water bath

VIII Think of anything else but the fast

IX No matter from what motive you are fasting, during this precious time, think of your Maker, and of your relation to Him and His other creation, and you will make discoveries you may not have even dreamed of

With apologies to medical friends, but out of the fullness of my own experience and that of fellow-cranks I say without hesitation, FAST

- (a) if you are constipated,
- (b) if you are anaemic,
- (c) if you are feverish,
- (d) if you have indigestion,
- (e) if you have a headache,
- (f) if you are rheumatic,
- (g) if you are gouty,
- (h) if you are fretting and foaming,
- (i) if you are depressed,
- (j) if you are overjoyed,

and you will avoid medical prescriptions and patent medicines

Eat only when you are hungry and when you have laboured for your food — *Young India* . December 17, 1925

## 18 THE KEYSTONE OF THE ETHICS

Self-restraint is the very keystone of the ethics of vow-taking For instance, one cannot take a vow of self-indulgence, to eat, drink and be merry, in short to do as one pleases This warning is necessary because I know of instances when an

attempt was made to cover things of questionable import by means of vows. In the heyday of non-co-operation one even heard the objection raised, "How can I resign from Government service when I have made a covenant with it to serve it?" Or again, "how can I close my liquor shop when I have bound myself by contract to run it for five years?" Such questions might appear puzzling sometimes. But on closer thinking it will be seen that a vow can never be used to support or justify an immoral action. A vow must lead one upwards, never downwards towards perdition

—*Young India* August 22, 1929

## 19 QUIET THINKING

I have learnt a lot during these days of quiet thinking. What have you? Could you assure me that you will never repeat your mistake? You may err again but this fast will be lost on you if you do not realize the way out of it. Truthfulness is the master key. Do not lie under any circumstances whatsoever. Keep nothing secret, take your teachers and your elders into your confidence and make a clear breast of everything to him. Bear ill-will to none, do not say an evil thing of any one behind his back, above all "to thine own-self be true," so that you are false to no one else. Truthful dealing even in the least little things of life is the only secret of a pure life

You must have noticed that I receive my inspiration on such occasions from the hymn "*Vaishnaya Jan to tene kahiya*" (He is the true *Vaishnava* etc) That hymn is enough to sustain me, even if I were to forget the *Bhagawad Gita*. To tell you the truth, however, there is one thing which is even simpler, but which may possibly be difficult for you to understand. But that has been my polar star all along during life's Journey—the conviction that Truth is God and untruth a denial of Him

—*Young India* · Dec 10, 1925

## 20. WAITING ON GOD

But the whole difficulty I think arises from the unwillingness to believe that there is such a thing as "Waiting on God". This unwillingness is natural in an age of disbelief. I happened to be sitting the other day listening to speeches by professors,

clergymen and educationists assembled to witness the foundation-laying ceremony of St Stephen's College Building. A young English girl sitting not far from me went on interjecting at every five minutes "Poor God! Why is he being brought in at every step?" With those constituted as she was it would be useless to argue that there is a thing as waiting on God in the hour of one's trial.

Child Dhruva rushed into a forest infested by snakes and tigers and famishingly waited on the lord Savitri lived a life of hard austerities and vows and went through a four day's fast before she decided to meet Death face to face and defeat his purpose in taking away her husband. These for Gandhiji are not fairy stories but lessons in spiritual growth. Those who believe in the Sermon on the Mount as a Gyspel of daily observances should understand this, and certainly those who have ventured out in distant lands in the name of the Lord.

—Mahadev Desai